



York Regional Council Highlights



The Regional Municipality of York



March 2007

York Region endorses building HOV lanes for road widening projects

In an effort to help improve traffic flow on Regional roads, York Regional Council today endorsed, in principle, the design and construction of High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes for capital projects that involve a road widening from four to six lanes.

The concept of HOV lanes in York Region is not new. HOV lanes are currently in use along Yonge Street from Centre Street to Steeles Avenue, to help facilitate traffic to the Toronto Transit Commission's (TTC) Finch subway station. These lanes are also in use on the provincially-governed Highway 404 between Beaver Creek and Highway 401.

Studies undertaken on Yonge Street, Highway 404 and other jurisdictions using HOV lanes suggest:

- HOV lanes carry fewer vehicles but more passengers than regular lanes
- HOV lanes increase carpooling by as much as 40 per cent
- HOV lanes reduce travel time
- HOV lanes increase bus ridership

York Region's 2002 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) identified several areas where HOV lanes, or dedicated bus-only lanes, could be used to manage high levels of traffic congestion. These roadways – slated for widening from four to six lanes – suggested that HOV lanes would only be warranted where it could move 900 persons per hour.

These roadways include:

- Jane Street from Highway 7 to Steeles Avenue
- Keele Street from Highway 407 to Steeles Avenue
- Dufferin Street from Glen Shields Avenue North to Steeles Avenue
- Bathurst Street from Major Mackenzie Drive to Centre Street
- Bayview Avenue from Major Mackenzie Drive to Steeles Avenue
- Leslie Street from Highway 407 to Steeles Avenue
- Kennedy Road from Highway 7 to Highway 407
- McCowan Road from Highway 7 to 14th Avenue
- Rutherford Road/Carrville Road from Jane Street to Yonge Street
- 16th Avenue from Yonge Street to McCowan Road

With approval in principle by York Regional Council, Transportation and Works staff will incorporate HOV lanes into the detailed design of Dufferin Street. HOV lanes will also be presented, as part of the Environmental Assessment process, as options for Bayview Avenue, 16th Avenue, Keele Street, Leslie Street, Kennedy Road and McCowan Road.

Operating policies, including required numbers of people per vehicle, will be finalized prior to the implementation of HOV lanes along Dufferin Street.

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York Regional Council accepts list of potential facility sites

York Regional Council today achieved another major milestone in the Durham/York Residual Waste Environmental Assessment Study by accepting a list of five potential sites – four in Durham Region and one in York Region – for an energy-from-waste facility to manage York and Durham Regions' residual waste.

The four sites located in Durham Region are in the Town of Clarington and the single York Region site is located in the Town of East Gwillimbury on York Region-owned land near Davis Drive and Highway 404.

The five sites were recommended by the Study's consultants and approved for public consultation at Durham Regional Council yesterday before being brought forward at today's York Regional Council meeting.

A public consultation event will be taking place on Tuesday, April 10th, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Roman Palace Banquet Hall, 1096 Ringwell Road in the Town of Newmarket to allow residents an opportunity to receive more information on the project and share their comments. Residents are asked to pre-register by calling 1-866-398-4423. Two similar events will be held in Durham Region on Thursday, April 12th from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Clarington Beech Centre, 26 Beech Street, Bowmanville and on Saturday, April 14th from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Municipality of Clarington Municipal Office, 40 Temperance Street, Bowmanville.

Following public consultation, further studies on all five potential sites will occur throughout the spring and summer and a preferred site will be recommended to York and Durham Councils in September of this year.

Energy-from-waste plants, or thermal facilities, have been proven to operate safely around the world, including in Europe, Asia, the United States and in nearby Brampton.

The entire cost for this project, including planning, engineering and construction of the facility, is approximately \$250 million. This amount will be shared by both York and Durham Regions.

York Region partnered with Durham Region in 2005 on the Durham/York Residual Waste Environmental Assessment Study to find a way to manage solid waste remaining after diversion efforts, such as re-using, recycling and composting.

In June 2006, thermal treatment with energy recovery was recommended as the preferred technology for managing residual waste (the waste left over after diversion efforts).

In Fall 2006, the Study team finalized the evaluation and screening criteria for potential sites for the facility and began searching in both Regions. This process also included a public call for willing sellers where any party interested in proposing a privately-owned site for a potential new facility could submit their proposal.

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York Region to partner in Oak Ridges Moraine Corridor Park Management Plan

York Regional Council today endorsed the Oak Ridges Moraine Corridor Park Management Plan, prepared by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) for the Government of Ontario.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Park consists of approximately 428 hectares (1,057 acres) of land that will be transferred by private owners and developers to the Province of Ontario as part of the Pickering Land Exchange Agreement reached in 2004. The intent of the transfer is to provide a natural continuous east-west corridor that protects the headwaters of two major watersheds, the Humber and Rouge Rivers.

The park management plan will restore 180 hectares (445 acres) of the natural ecosystem and provide ongoing protection for the overall area. The plan also calls for the design and building of a five-kilometre pedestrian trail that will link to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail.

York Region will provide expertise in reforestation and forest management to assist in the ongoing protection and rehabilitation and development measures along Regional roadways adjacent to the park to help prevent animal deaths.

Funding to rehabilitate the Oak Ridges Moraine Corridor Park will be approximately \$3.5 million, provided by the current private owners and developers.

Business Wisdom Exchange consultations with CEOs serve as valuable source of insight on issues impacting economic growth

York Regional Council received a report today outlining the results of interviews conducted with Chief Executive Officers across York Region under an initiative called the Business Wisdom Exchange.

The purpose of the interviews with CEOs was to obtain valuable insights on current issues facing York Region businesses and to gauge interest in attending York Region organized events.

Council authorized staff to coordinate with the York Region Chairman's office to develop a structure for future events with the Region's business leaders focused on key themes to sustain economic growth as identified in the Business Wisdom Exchange interviews and to develop a pilot event.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Regional Council supports creation and development of new business

York Regional Council gave the nod of approval to a staff report presenting an update of the activities and a 2007 work plan for the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre, which provides assistance in the creation of new enterprises and the development of early growth stage businesses.

The Centre responded to 6,373 general enquiries and provided 257 consultations. It held 12 seminars and workshops, a *Bridges to Better Business Conference* and partnered in an Enterprising Women's Conference. It also processed 47 Summer Company applications resulting in 10 approvals, and 43 Business Plan Challenge submissions resulting in one that went to the Provincial finals.

As a result of the Centre's efforts, 96 businesses were registered, 67 new businesses were started, 10 business expanded operations and 102 jobs were created.

The Centre will continue with the services it is currently providing to new entrepreneurs. At the same time, in view of the increasing demand for support to growth companies with less than 10 employees, the Centre will expand its services to companies with less than 10 employees through partnerships with community-based organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade.

For more information about the 2007 activities of the Small Business Enterprise Centre, please contact James Nicholson, York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre, (905) 830-4444, Ext. 1517 or email james.nicholson@york.ca

York Region will receive Geoconnections funding for Internet mapping for sustainable development

The Federal Government has awarded York Region special funding to implement a collaborative Internet mapping project designed to assist planners across York Region with planning, growth management and sustainable development purposes.

York Regional Council authorized staff to enter into a project funding agreement on behalf of York Region with the GeoConnections Program, Natural Resources Canada.

GeoConnections funding in the amount of \$182,000 will enable the Region to develop geospatial applications that will be useful to planners as they deal with intensification, sustainable development and the *Places to Grow* legislation. The proposed project will further advance geospatial infrastructure across the public sector in York Region.

York Regional Council Highlights

Sustainability strategy integrates economic, community and environmental objectives

York Regional Council today approved the preliminary draft of the York Region Sustainability Strategy, a plan that outlines a new approach to decision-making that better integrates economic, community and environmental objectives.

The framework consists of more than 80 action items obtained from public consultations that are organized under the themes of corporate culture of sustainability, healthy communities, economic vitality, sustainable natural environment, public engagement, education and partnerships, and implementation and monitoring.

Regional Council directed staff to refine the draft strategy with stakeholders, experts and local municipalities. The Region will now hold a series of stakeholder workshops and focus groups in the spring and bring forward a final strategy for Regional Council approval in June.

Along with the findings from York Region's Growth Management public consultations, the Strategy will guide Regional staff in reviewing and updating the Regional Official Plan. It will also feed directly into the Infrastructure Master Plan updates for water, wastewater, transit and transportation.

York Region's website – www.york.ca – provides information on the Region's Sustainability initiative as well as opportunities to submit online feedback. Click on the "Planning for Tomorrow" icon on the main page for more information, or email your comments or questions to futureyork@york.ca

2007 Federal and Provincial Budgets

York Regional Council received for information a report which provided highlights of the recent 2007 Federal and Provincial Budgets. Some of the impacts and financial implications related to York Region commencing in the 2007 fiscal year with continuing benefits into 2008 and subsequent years include:

2007 Provincial Budget

- Phase out of GTA Pooling
- Support for Transit Initiatives
- Support for Individuals and Families
- Assessment and Property Tax Measures

2007 Federal Budget

- Federal Gas Tax Program
- Infrastructure Advantage – Building Canada Fund
- A national fund for public-private partnerships
- Creation of new child care spaces
- Social programs
- Public security
- National Water Strategy
- Fuel Efficiency Standards

York Regional Council Highlights

Emergency Management Program: 2006 Annual Training Exercise Results

York Regional Council today approved a report outlining the recommendations of “Operation FLU-READY” – York Region’s Annual training and exercises for Regional staff and first responders and stakeholders across the Region – including Police, Fire, EMS, Hospital and Public Health officials.

Report recommendations include that York Region:

- continue to develop business continuity programs to ensure the continued delivery of essential services and critical functions
- update and test the Region’s departmental emergency plans to ensure a coordinated and effective response
- develop appropriate human resources policies
- develop and test crisis communications plans to ensure timely, consistent and effective messaging between all stakeholders
- communicate Emergency Management’s personal preparedness message to staff and the community on an on-going basis

Appointment of the First Alternate Regional Fire Coordinator

York Regional Council today confirmed the appointment of Chief Greg Senay, City of Vaughan Fire Department as Alternate Regional Fire Co-ordinator, under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.

The role of the Regional Fire Coordinator or alternates ensures resource support to the Regional Emergency Operations center during an emergency. The City of Vaughan has provided corporate approval for Chief Senay to take on this task.

Growth in child population and increase in number of low-income families put pressure on 2006 funding for child care fee subsidies

In 2006, an average of 3,264 children were subsidized per month by York Region. There are 24,994 licensed centre-based and 640 home-based child care spaces in York Region.

While the number of spaces covered by Purchase of Service Agreements has increased, the percentage of all licensed spaces for which provincial child care fee subsidy is available has decreased from 17 per cent to 10.4 per cent between 1999 and 2006.

As a result of growth in the child population and an increase in the number of low-income families, the current level of provincial funding for fee subsidy does not meet the community need.

York Regional Council Highlights

Council receives an overview of Growth Management strategy options

Today, staff provided York Regional Council with a report presenting an overview of growth management issues. The Growth Management strategy presents the theme of sustainability and incorporates the values of sustainable natural environment, economic vitality and healthy communities.

Growth management initiatives completed to date include:

- the vacant residential land inventory
- vacant employment land inventory
- preliminary intensification analysis
- initial public consultation
- the natural heritage and new communities workshop

Upcoming reports for 2007 include: Regional forecasts, land budget/GM options, residential and employment area analyses, residential intensification strategy, an update to the natural heritage system and growth management consultations.

There are a number of significant issues that will be explored including: the pace of growth, housing mix, area municipal shares and expansion into new greenfield areas.

For further information about this report, please contact John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning at 905-830-4444 Ex. text. 1500.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region announces appointments to the 2007-2010 Accessibility Advisory Committee

York Regional Council announced the appointment of members to the 2007–2010 Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), a committee that will advise Council on how to make it easier for people with disabilities to use Regional programs and services by identifying barriers and recommending action to remove and prevent them.

The committee is comprised of nine citizen members from across the Region and four members of Regional Council. The majority of the members have a disability. The appointees include:

- York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch (ex-officio)
- Town of Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora
- Town of Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor
- Town of Georgina Regional Councillor Danny Wheeler
- Janice Cameron
- Valerie Evans
- Margaret Gaukel
- Cindy Gorlewski
- Beverley Hall
- Kirsten Hill
- Diane Humeniuk
- Wilf Morley
- Trish Robichaud

A formal recruiting process opened on December 3, 2006 and closed on January 8, 2007. Close to 70 people in York Region applied to serve on the committee.

The York Region AAC was established to meet the requirements of the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 (ODA)* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*. The purpose of the committee is to advise Regional Council on the implementation of the *ODA*, including the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of the Region's annual accessibility plans and to advise on the Region's compliance with the standards of the *AODA*.

Transaction will allow for construction of pedestrian bridge

York Regional Council today accepted recommendations outlining the purchase of lands in the Town of Richmond Hill that will allow for the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting the GO Station to the Viva Richmond Hill Centre Terminal (east side of Yonge Street, just north of Highway 7).

Construction is planned to commence in summer 2007.

York Regional Council Highlights

Review of 2006 decisions regarding tenant eligibility shows system is working well

York Regional Council received a report providing information regarding internal reviews conducted in 2006 within the Social Housing Program. The Province, through the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 (SHRA)*, requires that an internal review process be in place to review decisions which affect applicants' eligibility for the centralized waiting list and tenants' eligibility for rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) assistance.

In 2006, the total number of internal reviews increased by 19 per cent from 364 received in 2005 to 432 received in 2006. Of these, 126 decisions (29 per cent) were upheld, 279 (65 per cent) were overturned and 27 (6 per cent) were amended.

Most of the decisions overturned were changed because additional information was submitted with the Internal Review request. There were 351 requests from social housing applicants and 81 were from RGI tenants (housing provider decisions).

The Internal Review Program allows applicants and tenants to have an objective review of decisions related to their eligibility for RGI assistance. The process is also an important quality control mechanism. Combined with regular audits of housing provider rent calculations, the internal review process helps regional staff ensure that RGI assistance is appropriately allocated, that our subsidy dollars are calculated accurately and that only eligible households receive subsidy.

In addition, the internal review process is the only mechanism under the legislation that allows RGI applicants to have a second chance to provide the information needed to retain their spot on the centralized waitlist. It is also the only way for RGI tenants to be able to supply the required information to prevent them from losing their subsidy after they have been given a notice of subsidy termination.

As the Internal Review Program has become more familiar to applicants, tenants and their advocates, the number of requests for internal reviews has risen each year. This trend is expected to continue.

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Changes will increase disabled access to modified housing units

York Regional Council today approved changes to allow people with disabilities who are 45 years of age and older to be eligible for modified units in seniors' buildings. Council also approved modifications to the occupancy standards for the largest unit a person with disabilities, under the age of 45, can occupy.

These changes will enhance eligibility for modified units in the municipality where people with disabilities receive support from their family and/or community and to improve access to services that help people with disabilities live independently.

York Region administers 380 modified units that are designed for individuals with a physical disability in order to allow them to live independently. Of these units, there are 248 one-bedroom units, 96 two-bedroom units and 36 three-bedroom units.

As of January 4, 2007, there were 68 households on the modified unit waitlist. The waiting time for a household to be placed in a modified unit was approximately one and half years in 2005 and two years in 2006.

Rent supplement programs assist low income and special needs households in York Region

York Regional Council today received a summary of the rent supplement activities for 2006. Currently, there are two types of Rent Supplement Programs in the Region: Commercial Rent Supplement (CRS) and the Strong Communities Rent Supplement (SCRS). Up to 506 rent supplement units are delivered under these two programs: 98 units under the CRS program and 408 units under the SCRS program. There are currently 26 landlords participating in the programs under 47 agreements.

The rental units are located primarily in buildings owned by private sector landlords. The units under agreement are made available to eligible households from the Centralized Waiting List (CWL). The household pays the rent-geared-to-income (RGI) and the Region pays the landlord the difference between the RGI amount and the market rent for the unit.

The Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 (SHRA) requires the Region to fund the 98 units allocated to the CRS program. The budgeted cost of this program for 2006 was \$634,000. The SCRS program costs are fully funded by the province, up to \$2,854,199.

The Rent Supplement Programs are an effective means of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the Region. In particular, the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program enables the Region to secure more than \$2.8 million of provincial funding annually to assist low income and special needs households in York Region.

York Regional Council Highlights

York Region awarded “2006 Best Campaign”

The Regional Municipality of York has received the *2006 Best Campaign* award from the Association of Municipal Recycling Coordinators. The Best Campaign award was given for the promotion of our Household Hazardous Waste program. The Best Campaign category is judged on creativity, cohesiveness, range of media used, effectiveness and overall aesthetic appeal.

The award-winning campaign included advertising in newspapers, on buses, the distribution of brochures, special drop-off events and a TV commercial. As a result of the campaign, York Region’s Household Hazardous Waste depots experienced a 12 per cent increase in traffic over the previous year.

York Region recognizes Peace Tree Day

York Regional Council is recognizing June 1, 2007 as Peace Tree Day. Peace Tree Day is an annual festival for people of every culture, race and religion to celebrate peace and diversity together. Plans are being made for a celebratory event on June 1, to mark the day.

Council Highlights compiled by Masrine Guthrie-Peart, Office of the CAO,
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The next Regional Council Meeting will be held Thursday, April 19, 2007 at 9:30 a.m.

The contents of this summary are for information purposes only. Actual text of Council resolutions and official copies of reports to Council can be obtained from the York Region Web site at www.york.ca under Regional Government.