

Thursday, June 19, 2008

For Immediate Release

## York Regional Council – June 19, 2008

### ***York Regional Council receives 2007 Annual Report***

York Regional Council received The Regional Municipality of York's 2007 Annual Report.

The 65-page report highlights Council accomplishments from 2007 and contains financial statements, auditor reports, a statistical review and a report from the York Regional Treasurer.

The report also includes a sister document of the Housing York Inc. Annual Report, entitled *Building Strong Communities*.

The 2007 Annual Report is available for pick-up at the Information Kiosk of the York Region Administrative Centre in the Town of Newmarket and other York Region facilities. It will also be available online at the York Region website [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) under "Important Links" as of July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### ***York Region hires new Deputy Clerk***

York Regional Council passed a bylaw today appointing Drew Westwater as the new Deputy Clerk for The Regional Municipality of York. Drew replaces Jeffrey Abrams who became Clerk for the City of Vaughan in May.

Drew has a wealth of experience in public service, including seven years as Clerk for the former City of Scarborough, six years with Elections Ontario and two years as Deputy Clerk for the City of Mississauga.

### ***Barbara Ann Bartlett appointed to York Regional Police Services Board***

York Regional Council has appointed Barbara Ann Bartlett to the York Regional Police Services Board.

Barbara Ann Bartlett replaces Barbara Munro as the York Regional Council appointee on the Police Services Board effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, when Barbara Munro's term is completed.

The York Regional Police Services Board has seven members, including the York Region Chairman, two members of York Regional Council, three members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and one appointed by resolution of York Regional Council.

### ***Members of York Regional Council recognized for service***

York Regional Council recognized four of their members for their lengthy service to Council and York Region's residents.

Town of Markham Regional Councillor Gordon Landon was recognized for 15 years of service, and Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson, Town of Georgina Mayor Robert Grossi and Town of Richmond Hill Mayor David Barrow were each recognized for 10 years of service.

### ***Deputy Treasurer Ken Hill retires after 28 years of service***

York Regional Council recognized Director of Financial Services and Deputy Treasurer Ken Hill for 28 years of service and congratulated him on his retirement.

Ken began his service with York Region in 1980 and has worked with every Regional Treasurer since the Region was incorporated in 1971. Ken's efforts were instrumental to the Region in securing the prestigious Canadian Award for Financial Reporting for 10 consecutive years.

### ***York Region supports the implementation of a York University Medical School***

York Regional Council has added its support to York University in implementing a new medical school to meet the demand for physicians in our growing communities. The medical school will provide improved teaching opportunities at York Region's three existing hospitals and to a fourth facility planned in the City of Vaughan.

### ***Greening Strategy projects and property securement funding update***

York Regional Council received a report detailing projects underway as part of the 2008 Greening Strategy. York Region allocates \$1.4 million annually to the Greening Strategy, which has helped secure more than 525 hectares on 20 properties for protection and naturalization since 2001.

To assist with further property securement, the report recommends that the \$1.4 million annual allocation continue next year, as part of the proposed 2009 Business Plan and Budget.

For more information on these securement projects, please view the [staff report](#).

### ***York Region acquires Wolske property in Town of Georgina***

York Regional Council approved the purchase of a 4.5-hectare property in the Town of Georgina for \$83,697, as part of the York Region Greening and Securement Strategy. The property, purchased from Mr. Helmut and Ms Georgina Wolske, sits adjacent to the Godfrey tract of the York Regional Forest.

York Region will use the Wolske property to expand the Godfrey tract, as well as provide more public access to the York Regional Forest.

### ***York Region helps acquire Swan Lake property with TRCA in Town of Richmond Hill***

York Regional Council has agreed to fund up to \$1.2 million to help the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) purchase the 20-hectare Swan Lake property in the Town of Richmond Hill as part of the York Region Greening and Securement Strategy.

The TRCA has an Agreement of Purchase and Sale with the owners of Swan Lake, the Hollander family of Richmond Hill, to buy the property for \$3.58 million. TRCA is asking York Region to fund \$1.2 million or one third of the cost (whichever is lower) as part of its ongoing partnership with the Region to secure significant properties for preservation and naturalization.

The property sits adjacent to three TRCA-owned properties that were secured in partnership with York Region, which form part of a natural east-west corridor on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

### ***Emerald Ash Borer***

York Regional Council received a report detailing the impact that the Emerald Ash Borer will have on York Region's forests over the next number of years. The report warned that the invasive insect species will enter York Region in the next two to five years, ultimately leading to the destruction of the 7,500 ash trees along Regional roads.

The cost to remove and replace these trees has been estimated at \$7 million, with potentially higher costs if the Emerald Ash Borer kills ash trees in York Region's forests.

York Region will formally request that the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food provide financial assistance to communities affected by the Emerald Ash Borer for tree removal and replanting efforts.

For more information on the Emerald Ash Borer and York Region, please read the [staff report](#).

### ***Anti-whistling policy endorsed***

York Regional Council has approved a policy to process requests from local municipalities who wish to enact bylaws prohibiting train whistling at railway crossings of Regional roads.

As part of the policy, York Region will share the costs with local municipalities to implement the required safety measures and public education that will be needed if train whistling is prohibited.

For more information, please read the [staff report](#).

### ***16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Trunk Sewer, Phase II environmental enhancements***

York Regional Council authorized staff to create formal agreements with the Rouge Park Alliance, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Town of Markham and Ontario Streams to implement forest plantings, wetland creation and reforestation projects as part of the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Trunk Sewer project.

York Region will spend more than \$2 million over the next five years as part of these environmental enhancement projects.

### ***Regional response to MOE discussion paper on the protection of Lake Simcoe***

York Regional Council provided recommendations to the Ministry of the Environment on their Discussion Paper “Protecting Lake Simcoe: Creating Ontario’s Strategy for Action.”

Recommendations included:

- Identifying and acknowledging the need to provide adequate wastewater servicing for growth forecasts identified in *Places to Grow*
- Ensuring long-term funding
- Maintaining Conservation Authority leadership of a revitalized, adequately funded and staffed program with wider stakeholder representation

For further information on the Region’s recommendations on “Protecting Lake Simcoe”, please read the [staff report](#).

### ***Water For Tomorrow program continues partnership with Resource Management Strategies Inc.***

York Region will continue to use Resource Management Strategies Inc. (RMSI) to provide the Region’s water efficiency programs as part of our award-winning *Water for Tomorrow* program.

Throughout 2009, RMSI will be working closely with York Region’s Environmental Services staff to administer instant rebate sales events, the summer water use reduction program and various educational programs, including the highly successful York Children’s Water Festival.

### ***Membrane filtration equipment selected for Keswick WPCP phase one expansion***

York Region will contract with Zenon Membrane Solutions, part of GE Water and Process Technologies Canada (GE Zenon), to use their patented filtration technology for the expansion of the Keswick Wastewater Pollution Control Plant (WPCP).

The Keswick WPCP currently uses the Zenon membrane technology to meet the stringent effluent compliance limits required by the Ministry of the Environment.

### ***York Region receives national sustainability award***

York Regional Council received the Sustainable Community Award for Transportation from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for our work on the Smart Commute program. The Regional commuting program is best known for matching up carpoolers online, in partnership with other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton (GTAH).

The award was presented jointly to York Region, the other GTAH municipalities and Metrolinx, the provincial agency responsible for developing seamless, integrated transit throughout the GTAH.

### ***York Region awarded COSTI Corporate Citation***

York Regional Council was recognized with a Corporate Citation by COSTI Immigrant Services for our outstanding efforts to assist newcomers in becoming successful and contributing members of our society.

York Region was recognized in particular for its work on the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services in the City of Vaughan, a one-stop information service to guide and support immigrants in York Region.

COSTI Immigrant Services has five offices in York Region and has provided employment services to newcomers for more than 20 years.

### ***YRT/Viva Travel Training Pilot Program***

York Regional Council received information on the York Region Transit (YRT) Travel Training pilot program launched in May 2008. The program provides instruction on a variety of transit topics, including buying tickets and passes, boarding and disembarking transit vehicles and planning a transit trip.

YRT is offering the training program to individual participants and groups, including the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), Ontario March of Dimes and York South Community Living.

The Travel Training program raises awareness of the available transit services in York Region, while assisting some YRT Mobility Plus riders to make the transition to more conventional service.

Results of the pilot program will be assessed in early 2009.

### ***New YRT/Viva bike rack program encourages passengers to bike and ride***

York Regional Council approved a new York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva bike rack program that makes it easier to bike and ride. Beginning next year, new bike racks will be mounted on the front of Viva vehicles to allow riders to store their bikes safely while travelling on transit.

The bike racks will be introduced in stages, with all buses outfitted by 2010. YRT/Viva is also considering the installation of new bike parking lockers. The design and location of the lockers is under review, with installation expected in 2009.

Total cost for the new bike rack program and future bike parking lockers is approximately \$694,000. Financial support for the program is being provided by Metrolinx through the BikeLinx Program.

### ***York Region confirms its commitment to air quality improvement***

York Regional Council approved the Corporate Air Quality Strategy, which outlines a series of Region-wide initiatives to improve air quality. The strategy identifies Regional activities and operations that contribute to air pollution and sets goals for reducing the Region's environmental impact.

As part of this initiative, the Region will be developing department-specific actions to help improve air quality, including the formation of an employee Clean Air Committee.

To view the Corporate Clean Air Strategy, please [click here](#).

### ***The Regional Municipality of York wins APTA safety award***

The Regional Municipality of York has won gold from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) for an excellent safety program on York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva buses.

In presenting the award, APTA cited York Region's innovative use of performance-based contracts in dramatically increasing the safety program of our contracted drivers. Following the implementation of performance-based contracts in early 2006, York Region experienced a 138-per cent safety improvement in just two years.

For more information on the APTA safety award, please view the [media release](#).

### ***More YRT/Viva security cameras on the way***

York Regional Council has approved the use of on-board security cameras on all YRT/Viva buses. The move builds on the fall 2007 program launch, when cameras were installed on 150 YRT/Viva buses.

Camera installation on remaining vehicles will begin this summer, and will include YRT Mobility Plus contracted sedans and taxis. The cost of the program is approximately \$1.8 million.

York Region will also spend an additional \$192,000 to integrate the cameras with our computer-aided dispatch and automatic vehicle location system to enable remote monitoring in the event of emergencies.

### ***Metrolinx seeks York Region input on transportation plan***

York Regional Council will support the efforts of Metrolinx to develop a Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Regional Transportation Plan by working on travel demand modelling and program priorities.

As part of the process, the Region will advocate for critical highway projects and additional north-south Light Rail Transit (LRT) and/or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors in York Region into Metrolinx's Test Network Concepts and ultimately into the draft Regional Transportation Plan.

### ***More Viva vehicles for 2009***

York Regional Council today authorized the purchase of six Viva rapid transit vehicles at a cost of \$5,650,560 to meet vehicle demand up to the end of 2009.

Continuous growth in Viva ridership prompted the order of 11 Viva vehicles in 2007. The additional order of six will bring the total Viva fleet to 107 vehicles.

York Region Council approved the investment of an additional \$227,000 for the supply, installation, integration and testing of Computer Aided Dispatch and Automatic Vehicle Location systems for the new Viva vehicles.

### ***York Region's employment rate remains strong for ninth year***

The *York Region Employment and Industry Report 2007*, which provides a detailed analysis of industry and employment in York Region, has been released.

The report found that:

- New job growth is matching our growing population
- There are an estimated 485,000 jobs in York Region
- The average annual employment growth rate was 3.5 per cent from 1998 to 2007
- Employment growth outpaced both the national and provincial growth rates over the past nine years

Copies of the report will be sent to area municipalities, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, other business groups and key stakeholders. The report will be available on York Region's website at [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### ***York Region responds to Ontario's long-term employment discussion paper***

York Region has responded to the Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal's employment discussion paper, *Planning for Employment in The Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper*, which was released on May 14, 2008.

The provincial paper examines long-term employment trends, strategic employment areas and planning beyond a 20-year horizon.

Among the Region's recommendations was a need for the Province to invest further in public transit, highways, research facilities and post-secondary education.

### ***Climate Change Workshop raised awareness of impacts and adaptation priorities***

As part of our *Sustainability Strategy*, York Region hosted a Climate Change Workshop to better understand the impacts of climate change and consider strategies to adapt to this change.

York Region will be undertaking a number of Initiatives over the next year to adapt to climate change, including new emergency standards to assess climate change risk, air quality and West Nile virus awareness programs, wastewater modeling that anticipates more intense storms and planting of more resilient street trees.

### ***Visualizing the look of urbanization in York Region***

York Region will prepare a catalogue of photos depicting what the major centres in York Region could begin to look like over the next two decades. Also, the Region will highlight best practices used to identify the next generation of sustainable compact development opportunities.

The initiative will focus on intensification in the Regional Centres and Corridors served by rapid transit in the Town of Markham, the City of Vaughan, the Town of Richmond Hill and the Town of Newmarket.

The photos will show how more than 40 per cent of all new residential development will be built within the boundaries established in Ontario's *Places to Grow Plan*.

### ***York Regional Council approves Official Plan amendments initiated by the City of Vaughan***

York Regional Council approved a series of City of Vaughan Official Plan Amendments (OPA) along the Highway 7 corridor in Vaughan.

The amendments add a new designation, "Prestige Area – Centres and Highway 7 Corridor." The new designation elevates the existing corridor to a more intense, dynamic, mixed-use, compact, pedestrian friendly, transit-supportive corridor.

### ***York Regional Council marks Inclusivity Action Plan success***

York Regional Council congratulated the Human Services Planning Coalition (HSPC), the Inclusivity Action Plan Steering Committee and six working groups for their collective efforts and accomplishments in making The Regional Municipality of York a more ethno-culturally inclusive community.

Council also endorsed a sustained focus on ethno-cultural inclusivity and the continuation of the Inclusivity Action Plan (IAP), a collaborative community-based initiative of the HSPC that involved 88 individuals representing 47 organizations over the past 2 ½ years.

The HSPC will provide a business plan and budget for further ethno-cultural inclusivity projects in a follow-up report to Regional Council later this year.

### ***York Region prepares to fund new, less established community agencies***

York Regional Council approved a proposal to enhance the Community Development and Investment Fund (CDIF) and to create a New Agency Development Fund.

These changes will enable York Region to respond to increasing needs for community services resulting from the Region's diverse and rapidly growing population. Supporting new and emerging agencies is considered vital to respond to the growing, complex service needs of the Region's more demographically diverse community.

A staff report in September will outline how an expanded CDIF strategy and New Agency Development Fund Strategy may be implemented.

### ***York Regional Council provides input to Ontario's poverty strategy***

York Regional Council has endorsed 10 key policy directions for inclusion in the Government of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, which will address the needs of residents who face economic hardship.

York Region is encouraging the provincial government to invest in more childcare services, affordable housing, skills development and employment assistance programs. Combined, these initiatives will enable people to improve their situation and experience a higher quality of life for themselves and their families. For more information, please read the [staff report](#).

### ***Next meeting of York Regional Council***

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. at the York Region Administrative Centre Council Chambers, located at 17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket.

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### ***Council Highlights compiled by:***

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