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Town of Aurora

Memorandum

Mayor's Office

Re: York Regional Council Highlights of September 28, 2023

To: Members of Council

From: Mayor Mrakas

Date: October 17, 2023

Recommendation

1. That the York Regional Council Highlights of September 28, 2023, be received for information.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Tuesday, October 3, 2023

York Regional Council – Thursday, September 28, 2023

Livestreaming of the public session of Council and Committee of the Whole meetings is available on the day of the meeting from 9 a.m. until the close of the meeting. Past sessions are also available at [York.ca/councilandcommittee](https://york.ca/councilandcommittee)

Erin Mahoney appointed new CAO for The Regional Municipality of York

York Regional Council [appointed](#) Erin Mahoney as York Region's new Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

Previously serving as York Region's Commissioner of Public Works, Ms. Mahoney brings more than 15 years of experience to the role. With a proven track record of leadership, an extensive background in regional government and the private sector, Ms. Mahoney is well-positioned to lead York Region into a new era of growth and innovation.

She holds a Bachelor of Science (Honours) from Memorial University of Newfoundland and a Master of Engineering from the University of Western Ontario and is active on several boards and volunteer agencies. Her ability to collaborate, lead with empathy and confidently make pivotal decisions aligns perfectly with York Region's vision of strong, caring, safe communities.

In announcing Ms. Mahoney's appointment, Regional Council also expressed gratitude to out-going CAO Bruce Macgregor, who served York Region with an unwavering dedication and commitment for the past 16 years.

Ms. Mahoney's tenure as York Region CAO began end of day Friday, September 29, 2023.

Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action

Regional Council received a [memo](#) outlining York Region's action to address the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's seven Calls to Action](#) directed at municipal governments.

Following federal direction in 2021, York Region will continue to observe September 30 as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This day honours survivors of residential schools, their families and communities and ensures public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process. York Region will also continue to observe the day annually by flying the Every Child Matters flag at half-mast in honour of survivors and lives lost.

Beyond National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, York Region has continued to work with Indigenous partners to make progress on two specific Calls to Action: #47 and #57.

Work to address Action #47 includes concrete steps to reject concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples and lands. In the past year, York Region has made progress on this action through continued engagement with Indigenous communities on Regional infrastructure plans, the incorporation of a wayfinding strategy for the York Regional Forest that includes the use of education and partnerships with Indigenous groups, exploring opportunities to partner with First Nations on Greening Strategy programs and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the York Regional Forest through guided forest walks with an Anishinaabe grandmother.

Expanded internal training and education programs meet the needs of Call to Action #57, which calls upon government to provide public servants with skills-based training and education on the history of Aboriginal Peoples, including the legacy of residential schools.

As part of the 2023 Budget process, Regional Council approved a permanent fulltime position to support the Region's Indigenous relations. York Region has worked closely with a senior Indigenous advisor to create a meaningful and appropriate job description for this role and is in the process of filling this position.

While York Region prides itself on being a welcoming, diverse and inclusive community where everyone feels like they belong, there is more work to do to support meaningful truth, reconciliation and healing. York Region remains committed to learning more and doing more to be allies for change and will continue to work with all levels of government and Indigenous community partners to continue work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

York Region providing support for asylum seekers

Regional Council [approved](#) up to \$4.3 million to support asylum seekers in York Region with interim housing solutions and other wrap-around supports.

In addition to providing safe and secure temporary accommodation, York Region is working with other community partners to provide wrap-around services that will further help asylum seekers settle, achieve stability and find employment. Operated by the Canadian Red Cross, with support from settlement agencies and other partners, the site is part of a broader response by Regional and single-tier municipalities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Regional Council will continue to advocate for federal funding through the Interim Housing Assistance Program to fully offset upfront municipal costs. Advocacy efforts will also include requesting the Federal Government fund and implement a regional response that will provide coordination for asylum seekers to access adequate shelter and support.

The successful integration of newcomers, including asylum seekers, requires a coordinated effort by all levels of government. Without this coordination, municipalities are at risk of experiencing an unsustainable demand on their resources.

To learn more about various roles, responsibilities and services and supports for asylum seekers, visit york.ca/RefugeeResources

Loss of development charges costing York Region \$35.1 million and counting

Regional Council received a [mid-year financial progress report](#) providing an update on progress to date on expenditures and objectives outlined in the 2023 Regional budget, which included an update on the financial impacts of the [More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 \(Bill 23\)](#), current economic conditions, heightened impacts after the COVID-19 pandemic and other world events.

By July 30, 2023, development charges revenue lost due to changes implemented through the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* reached \$35.1 million, significantly impacting the Region's ability to fund the vital infrastructure required to support the construction of new homes.

In the absence of provincial assistance, York Region may have to explore other means to fund required infrastructure due to [revenue reductions](#) with *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* and the additional growth mandated by the Province. This could include future tax levy and water and wastewater user rate increases.

York Region will continue working with all levels of government, specifically the provincial government, to make the Region whole because of development charges collection reductions due to *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*.

Developers and businesses can find more information about fees and approvals at york.ca/landdevelopment

York Region continues to persevere with promising development activity

Regional Council received the [2023 Mid-Year Development Activity Summary](#), providing an overview of York Region's planning and development approvals for the first half of 2023.

While development activity remains strong and York Region continue to show promise of growth, there was a 48% decrease in collected development charges compared to the first half of 2022. Development charges are fees collected by municipalities on new developments to help pay for growth-related infrastructure such as water and wastewater servicing, roads and transit. This anticipated decrease is largely due to current economic conditions in the housing market and [impacts of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022](#).

Additional findings from [2023 Mid-Year Development Activity](#) include:

- York Region collected \$152,386,317 in development charges for the first half of 2023
- Overall proposed residential unit applications increased by 34% since mid-year 2022, with 1,171 single/semi/townhouse units in 2023
- Fee collection for reviewing development applications increased by 53% to \$3,729,331 in 2023, showing intent for increased development in York Region

Learn more about York Region's Growth Management at york.ca/planning and stay up to date on Housing Affordability initiatives at york.ca/housingaffordability

York Region's critical infrastructure assets continue to reliably serve community needs

York Region's [2022 Corporate State of Infrastructure Report](#) highlights Regional owned and operated infrastructure assets with an estimated replacement cost of \$25.3 billion, an increase from \$19 billion in 2022.

In 2022, 92% of all Regional assets were considered in very good to fair condition, up 3% from 2021.

Changes in inflation trends and improvements to replacement cost evaluation methods have significantly impacted the estimated replacement value of Regional assets. The following increases in reported asset value were driven by these changes:

- Water and Wastewater Services experienced increases of \$1.2 billion and \$2.5 billion, respectively
- Green Infrastructure Services, which includes a network of Region-owned street trees and forests, along with recreational and supporting infrastructure, experienced a significant increase of approximately \$1.2 billion due to improvements in the method of assessing the replacement cost of the York Regional Forest
- Road Services reported an increase of approximately \$1.1 billion due to a 22% increase in construction costs
- YorkNet's total replacement cost increased by \$20.1 million due to \$11.8 million in new asset construction and \$8.3 million from inflationary pressures
- Property Services total replacement cost increased by about \$150 million

- Senior Services reported an increase of \$3.5 million in replacement cost

York Region tracks, monitors and reports asset condition and assesses reserves annually. Assets listed in poor or very poor condition are prioritized for rehabilitation or replacement.

Train Whistle Cessation in the Town of Aurora, Township of King and City of Markham

Regional Council [authorized train whistle cessation](#) and safety enhancements, including new pavement markings and signage modifications at the following three road/rail crossings:

- St. John's Sideroad east of Yonge Street in the Town of Aurora
- Dufferin Street north of King Road in the Township of King
- 15th Sideroad west of Bathurst Street in the Township of King

Regional Council also approved new safety enhancements to benefit cyclists at the Ninth Line road/rail crossing in the City of Markham, which includes a York Region funded off-road cycle track and Metrolinx funded pedestrian gates. The installation of these safety measures is expected to be completed in 2024.

York Region establishing Automated Enforcement Processing Centre coming to

Regional Council [approved](#) the establishment of an in-house processing centre for automated enforcement infractions. The York Region Processing Centre will help create capacity to support Regional Council's commitment to add 60 new automated speed enforcement cameras by 2027.

The decision to continue this program comes after a successful two-year automated speed enforcement [pilot in specific school areas along Regional roads](#) where there were decreased operating speeds of approximately 9 km/hr and speed compliance more than doubled.

More than half of fatal collisions on Regional roads are related to speeding. Automated enforcement serves as an important initiative helping to improve safety and change driver behaviour in our community.

Memoranda of Understanding to be established between York Region and Conservation Authorities

The Ontario government has made amendments to the [Conservation Authorities Act](#), which apply to watersheds in York Region managed by Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA). Changes introduce a [new framework for conservation authority service delivery](#), including entering into agreements with municipalities for non-mandatory services by Monday, January 1, 2024.

New agreements outline mandatory and non-mandatory programs and services provided by each conservation authority through their annual budgets. Through the annual budget process, Council will have an opportunity to confirm the relevance and value of non-mandatory services to the Region. Examples of mandatory services may include natural hazard management, flooding and low-water response. Non-mandatory services include municipally requested services like natural area restoration, capital project support and erosion control.

Provincial regulations through [Bill 23](#) also now prescribe certain services conservation authorities will no longer provide, including non-mandatory review and comment for development applications. Municipalities will be required to lead natural heritage conformity and environmental compliance approvals under the *Planning Act* and *Environmental Assessment Act*. TRCA and LSRCA will continue to comment on development applications with respect to natural hazard matters.

A cross-departmental conservation authorities task force will support compliance with new regulatory requirements. York Region is also working with neighbouring municipalities to strive for consistency among services and agreements.

York Region to donate two decommissioned ambulances

Regional Council [approved the donation](#) of two decommissioned ambulances to two organizations supporting international communities, [UHelpUkraine](#) and [Voice of Vedas](#).

UHelpUkraine is a registered not-for-profit organization providing humanitarian support to Ukrainians impacted by the war in Ukraine. In collaboration with the Embassy of Ukraine to Canada, the organization will use the ambulance to provide emergency medical services for people in Ukraine.

Voice of Vedas is a registered charity that will use the ambulance to support the Guyana Dialysis Centres near Georgetown, Guyana to transport patients and offer mobile clinic services for patients in remote areas.

Decommissioned ambulances are those that have reached their maximum lifespan of five years or 250,000 kilometres. Since 2014, Regional Council has approved the donation of 14 decommissioned ambulances to registered charities, not-for-profit and humanitarian aid organizations providing training, first aid services at local community events, mobile mental health education and paramedic services.

The donations and delivery are scheduled to take place in 2024.

Introduction of Administrative Penalty System Bylaws and Tribunal

Regional Council [approved](#) the adoption of the Administrative Penalty System Bylaw and its associated Screening and Hearing Officer Bylaw.

With a proposed enactment date of Monday, January 1, 2024, this legislation aims to streamline minor bylaw infractions within York Region's jurisdiction, including camera-based enforcement and transit ridership matters.

The introduction of the Administrative Penalty Tribunal (APT) signifies a shift from courtroom disputes to a municipality-managed approach, using designated officers to adjudicate cases. This change aims to reduce court backlog and offers a community-centric solution for bylaw infractions. The APT also facilitates the growth of camera-based enforcement, aiming to increase community safety by promoting safer driving habits.

York Region declares intimate partner violence epidemic and supports victims of domestic violence

Regional Council [declared](#) gender-based and intimate partner violence as an epidemic and called upon senior levels of government to take action to prevent femicide and provide municipalities with the necessary emergency and social services supports to address this growing issue.

At the same meeting, Regional Council received an update on the [9th annual Fill a Purse for a Sister campaign](#) in support of victims of domestic violence in York Region. In addition to receiving the update, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Iain Lovatt challenged York Region's nine mayors to see which municipality can deliver the most purses.

Mayor Mrakas appointed as York Region delegate for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative

Regional Council [recommended the appointment](#) of Town of Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas as the York Region delegate for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is a binational coalition of more than 240 Canadian and U.S. mayors and local officials who work together to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin. The Cities Initiative integrates environmental, economic and social agendas to sustain a resource that represents approximately 20% of the world's surface water supply and provides safe drinking water for more than 40 million people.

Hon. Deb Schulte appointed to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority Regional Watershed Alliance

Regional Council [recommended the appointment](#) of the Hon. Deb Schulte as the municipal representative to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) Regional Watershed Alliance.

Since 2017, the TRCA Regional Watershed Alliance has served as an advisory committee to the TRCA Board and staff, supporting multi-stakeholder collaborations that build capacity to advance the Goals of [TRCA's strategic plan](#).

Celebrate tourism and experience York Region

Regional Council recognized Wednesday, September 27, 2023, as [World Tourism Day](#), a United Nations Day of observances that fosters awareness of the social, cultural, political and economic value of tourism.

Home to a wide array of tourist events and attractions, Regional Council also encouraged residents [experience York Region](#) and the many tourist destinations within our communities.

Franco-Ontarian Day

Regional Council acknowledged Monday, September 25, 2023, as [Franco-Ontarian Day](#) and celebrated the creativity, experience and contributions of York Region's Francophone community.

Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur

Regional Council recognized Rosh Hashana on Friday, September 15, 2023, and extend best wishes to members of the community celebrating the Jewish New Year.

Regional Council also acknowledged Monday, September 25, 2023, as Yom Kippur, recognizing the Jewish Day of Atonement.

National Forest Week

From Sunday, September 17 to Saturday, September 23, 2023, Regional Council recognized [National Forest Week](#).

Home to more than 2,500 hectares of protected land, the [York Regional Forest](#) plays a vital role in the lives of York Region residents and contributes to the economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the community.

Through National Forest Week, York Region celebrates our shared forest heritage and recognizes the importance of this valuable and renewable resource. Together, it is the shared responsibility of all York Region residents to protect this essential natural resource and do our part to keep it clean for future generations.

Canada's National Day of Service

On Monday, September 11, 2023, Regional Council recognized [Canada's National Day of Service](#) by extending thanks and appreciation to the first responders, civilian and military volunteers whose service to our communities contributes to a strong, caring, safe York Region.

Inspired by the kindness and generosity demonstrated by Canadians in the days following the September 11th terrorist attacks, National Day of Service is an opportunity for all residents to reflect on the importance of community, character and humanity by engaging in charitable activities and dedicating time to community service.

Regional Council also used the occasion to honour the nearly 3,000 innocent lives lost on September 11, 2001 and offered condolences to those who lost loved ones in this horrific act of violence.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 9 a.m. in the York Region Administrative Centre Council Chambers, located at 17250 Yonge Street in the Town of Newmarket. The meeting will be streamed on york.ca/live

The Regional Municipality of York consists of nine local cities and towns and provides a variety of programs and services to more than 1.2 million residents and 55,600 businesses with more than 615,000 employees. More information about the Region's key service areas is available at york.ca/regionalservices

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