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Town of Aurora
Memorandum
Office of the Mayor

Subject: York Regional Council Highlights of October 28, 2021

To: Members of Council

From: Mayor Mrakas

Date: November 16, 2021

Recommendation

- 1. That the York Regional Council Highlights of October 28, 2021, be received for information.**

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Monday, November 1, 2021

York Regional Council – Thursday, October 28, 2021

Live streaming 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)

York Region welcomes provincial reopening plans while continuing to respond to COVID-19

York Regional Council welcomed the release of the provincial [Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario and Manage COVID-19 for the Long-Term](#) as a measured and cautious plan to gradually open the economy in a way that balances the health and well-being of residents with the economic interests of businesses.

The lifting of [capacity limits](#) across businesses and facilities that require proof of vaccination will help drive economic activity and fuel the post-pandemic recovery of our communities.

At the same time, Regional Council remains committed to protecting the health and safety of York Region's 1.2 million residents by maintaining public health measures to help slow the spread of the virus in the community. This includes physical distancing, wearing a mask, staying home when feeling unwell and completing full immunization of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Still in the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, York Region has experienced a general plateau of new cases over the past several weeks with the situation being closely monitored.

Regional Council was provided with an [update on the Social Services response to COVID-19](#) and the Region's ongoing efforts to support vulnerable groups and community needs, including:

- The closure of York Region's Voluntary Isolation Centre in June 2021 and the subsequent partnership with Peel Region to facilitate any future York Region residents needing to self-isolate to [Peel Region's COVID-19 Voluntary Isolation Housing](#)
- Continued primary care and mental health and addictions support for people experiencing homelessness through the Community Paramedicine and York Region's Outreach Teams
- Supporting 33 projects delivered by 29 community agencies that address increased service demand for mental health, housing stability and food security assistance through the COVID-19 [Community Investment Fund](#)
- Continuation of vital services established to address the impacts of COVID-19 and an orderly wind-down of programs supported through additional \$12 million in [Social Services Relief Funding](#) from the province

Regional Council was also informed of existing [federal income supports](#), including the Canada Recovery Benefit, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit, Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, expired on October 23, 2021 and will be replaced by more targeted measures to help particularly hard-hit sectors. This change could potentially result in increased demand for Regional financial support programs, including Ontario Works, rent assistance and emergency assistance.

Regional Council also received an update on the financial impacts of COVID-19. Analysis suggests the financial impacts of the pandemic total \$220 million for 2021 to date and are expected to reach between \$265 and \$295 million by year end. Approximately 20%, or \$45.5 million, can be attributed to the delivery of the Region's mass immunization programs.

York Region continues to work with senior levels of government to address the continued financial impacts of the pandemic, with projected operating funding of \$171 million expected in 2021. In addition to the operating funding commitments, the Region expects to receive \$53.4 million for capital projects in support of the COVID-19 response and recovery, including a one-time \$33.8 million increase in Federal gas tax funding, \$12.3 million through the Canada Infrastructure Plan and \$7.3 million through the Social Services Relief Fund.

More information about York Region's ongoing response to COVID-19 can be found at york.ca/COVID19

Councillor Chan takes seat as alternate member of Regional Council

City of Richmond Hill Councillor Godwin Chan recited the Declaration of Office and assumed the seat of alternate member of York Regional Council for the City of Richmond Hill.

Under the [Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001](#), the Richmond Hill Council appointed Councillor Chan as alternate member following the retirement of former City of Richmond Mayor Dave Barrow. Councillor Chan will represent the City of Richmond Hill on Regional Council until the [vacancy in the Office of the Mayor](#) has been filled permanently.

Vacant Homes Tax could address York Region's affordable housing challenges

To address York Region's affordable housing challenges, Regional Council has authorized staff to begin a feasibility study for a [Vacant Homes Tax](#). Net revenues generated from this tax would support affordable housing initiatives.

Other than the City of Toronto, the province designates which municipalities may implement a Vacant Homes Tax. To date, no Ontario municipality has been designated. Should this tax be implemented in York Region, a 1% to 2% Region-wide vacancy tax rate could potentially generate between \$15 million and \$90 million in gross revenues in the first year.

Staff will begin public consultation on the design of a Vacant Homes Tax and anticipate reporting back to Council in 2022. Depending upon Regional Council direction, a final report on the Vacant Homes Tax would come to Council followed by a submission to the Province seeking the ability to implement the tax.

Rapid Housing Initiatives support affordable and transitional housing

Regional Council received an [update](#) on approved and proposed senior government funding initiatives that will create additional supply of affordable and transitional housing in York Region along with programing to prevent homelessness and mitigate risks to vulnerable population.

In October and December of 2020, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing confirmed a total of \$16,554,114 in Social Services Relief Fund Phase 2 funding to support the creation of [26 transitional housing units](#) with completion targets in early 2022:

- 8 new transitional housing units are being constructed on the Sutton Youth Services site at 20898 Dalton Road in the Town of Georgina

- 18 new transitional housing units are being constructed on the existing Porter Place/Leeder Place site at 18838 Highway 11 in the Town of East Gwillimbury

York Region was not included in Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Rapid Housing Initiative, but on August 24, 2021, York Region submitted a revised Rapid Housing Initiative application consisting of [five modular housing projects](#), representing 124 units.

Additionally, two priority projects in the Town of Newmarket and City of Markham were identified to support future housing development. Required planning applications to facilitate the pre-development activities on both sites are anticipated to be submitted in fall 2021.

Traffic volume and collision rates down 40% in 2020

Regional Council received the [Annual Traveller Safety Report](#) which provides a breakdown of traffic and collision data occurring on Regional roads during the previous calendar year.

In 2020, more than 30% of fatal collisions on Regional roads were related to speeding. Enforcement statistics over the past five years also identify speeding as the top traffic violation, representing more than 60% of all traffic offences.

Additional key findings in the 2020 Annual Traveller safety report include:

- Annual traffic volumes decreased between 20% to 50% during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020
- More than 60% of all traffic offences and more than 30% of fatal collisions were speed-related
- Annual collision rate decreased by approximately 40%
- Pedestrian collision rate decreased by 42%
- Cycling collision rate decreased by 35%
- 94% of pedestrian collisions and 84% of cycling collisions resulted in injury or death

York Region continues to put measures in place to address safety concerns including:

- Implementing a Region-wide 10 km/hour speed limit reduction by time of day in school zones, using the new school zone maximum speed sign
 - Piloting a two-year limited use, automated speed enforcement program in school zones at select locations to reduce speed
 - Enhancing traffic control measures to traffic signals or all-way stop which significantly reduces the frequency of T-bone collisions
 - Implementing fully protected left turns which reduces collisions at busy intersections
 - Rehabilitation pavement programs which improve traction leading to a reduction in rear-end collisions as well as extending the life of the road
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Funding the Yonge North Subway Extension in a financially sustainable manner

Regional Council passed a [resolution](#) thanking the Government of Ontario for renewing the Growth Cost Supplement to the Region's Annual Repayment Limit and for the provisions in the [Supporting People and Businesses Act, 2021, \(Bill 13\)](#) which amends the [Development Charges Act, 1997 \(Act\)](#) recognizing the [Yonge North Subway Extension \(YNSE\)](#) as a discrete service.

[Amendments](#) to Bill 13 support the Ontario economy by introducing measures to promote economic stability and encourage investment. As it relates to the Act, the proposed changes reflect Regional Council's [request](#) to treat the Yonge North Subway Extension as a discrete service, extending the planning horizon from 10 to 20 years, allowing the Region to fund and finance the municipal share of the subway extension in a financially sustainable manner.

Despite these positive changes, Bill 13 does not address Council's request to exempt the Yonge North Subway Extension from the freezing of development charges rates. Regional Council continues to work with the province to request an amendment to Bill 13 that would exempt the Yonge North Subway Extension from provisions that freeze development charges upon application under the *Act*.

High Occupancy Vehicle lane designated on Major Mackenzie

Regional Council approved a [traffic bylaw amendment](#) to allow the designation of Major Mackenzie Drive West in the City of Vaughan, between Pine Valley Drive and Islington Avenue, to become a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane.

These new HOV lanes will provide continuity along the Major Mackenzie corridor and complete the connection between the future Highway 400 and Highway 427 HOV lanes. Dedicated lanes for buses and vehicles carrying the driver and passenger(s) help limit bus delays and encourage carpooling.

These new HOV lanes become operational on Monday, November 1, 2021.

Creating more connections to the Region's transportation system and destinations

Regional Council received an update on the [Municipal Streetscape Partnership Program and Pedestrian and Cycling Partnership Program](#). These programs offer cost-sharing to the Region's cities and towns for local projects that support walking and cycling in safe and vibrant communities that all can enjoy.

Each year, York Region commits \$1 million to the Municipal Streetscape Program and \$500,000 to the Pedestrian and Cycling Program. For 2021, the following projects were funded:

Streetscaping

- \$253,414: Two bermed and planted landscape gateway features along Major Mackenzie Drive, Amusement Way and Jane Street in the City of Vaughan
- \$97,234: Enhanced pedestrian walkway on Highway 7, integrated into the Highway 7 rapidway in the City of Vaughan
- \$152,317: Streetscape design including planters with large trees faced in the same stone as the Civic Centre in the City of Vaughan
- \$242,357: Accessible access to Maple GO Station along Major Mackenzie Drive in the City of Vaughan
- \$65,668: Gateway features including masonry natural stone walls, fencing, planting, decorative paving and signage at Leslie Street and Mount Albert Sideroad in the Town of East Gwillimbury

Pedestrian and cycling

- \$148,500: Two trail connections to provide a link to the Rouge Valley Trail from Highway 7 and Mainstreet and Kennedy Road and Austin Drive in the City of Markham
- \$96,288: Construction of Phase 5 of the Lake to Lake Cycling Route and Walking Trail within the Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve in the City of Richmond Hill
- \$255,212: Construction of the Holland River Bridge over environmentally sensitive lands between Doane Road and Oriole Drive in the Town of East Gwillimbury

Both programs fund projects that support the Region's goals to create connections to the Region's transportation system and destinations. More information is available at york.ca/streetscape

Transportation Master Plan virtual consultations delivers results

York Region is completing public and stakeholder engagement to better understand the transportation needs and priorities of York Region residents, workers and businesses through to 2051. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many previously in-person [Transportation Master Plan \(TMP\) consultations](#) were moved to using virtual methods to conduct surveys, seek input and host online open houses.

Residents, businesses and workers interested in providing feedback on the future of York Region's roads, transit corridors, walking and cycling facilities and trails are invited to share their ideas and see what others are saying at york.ca/tmp

The information shared through these engagement processes are used to help draft recommendations for the transportation network and define future areas of focus. The final TMP update will be presented to Council in June 2022.

Water and Wastewater capital infrastructure status update

Regional Council received a [status update for key water and wastewater infrastructure projects](#) critical to meet future system demands, servicing capacity and associated approvals, including:

- Continued support for York Durham Sewage System and expanding capacity to meet growth
- \$2.9 billion in water, wastewater, waste management, forestry and energy projects through the 2021 Environmental Services Budget and 10-Year Capital Plan
 - Includes \$1.65 billion for growth infrastructure to provide servicing capacity in the Regional water and wastewater systems
 - Approximately \$1.2 billion over the next 10 years for proactive management and maintenance of infrastructure through a comprehensive asset management program
- \$100.5 million from Infrastructure Canada in Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Funding for five capital projects with further applications pending
- 131 active projects with additional project work forecasted focused on building the Regional trunk system, sustaining infrastructure service levels and managing system risk and resiliency

Growth-related water and wastewater projects are funded with development charges. Project timelines established in the 2021 10-Year Capital Plan are contingent on the Region achieving its growth and development charge collection projections.

During COVID-19, York Region has continued to deliver essential water and wastewater infrastructure projects identified in the 10-Year Capital Plan. To date, there have been no immediate, major impacts to ongoing environmental assessment, design and construction work as a result of the pandemic.

Providing quality senior care and improving long-term care

Regional Council received the [annual update](#) on York Region's two long-term care homes, [Newmarket Health Centre and Maple Health Centre](#).

The homes provide long-term care, short-stay and respite beds with an array of services for residents and continued to provide high-quality care to residents despite the challenges of a global pandemic.

2020 long-term care home highlights include:

- High occupancy rates (92.4% for Maple Health Centre and 97.9% for Newmarket Health Centre) for 2020 and remained in demand by those on the waitlist
- The Residents Quality of Life Survey for 2020 showed 100% of residents who provided a response on their "Overall Satisfaction" reported favourably
- The average number of non-compliance findings per Ministry of Health inspection in 2020 was 1.9 across both homes, lower than other municipal homes
- Maple Health Centre and Newmarket Health Centre improved or sustained performance on six of nine publicly reported indicators

Both homes received a three-year continuance of their accreditation status (2020 to 2023) - the longest period of accreditation the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities awards to long-term care homes.

As part of York Region's commitment to continuous improvement, York Region proposes [23 \(of the total 85\) priority recommendations](#) from the Ontario's Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission's report for urgent provincial action to transform the long-term care sector.

In addition, consultations also identified the need for transformation of the whole system for seniors' care with further provincial investments in home and community care, affordable senior-friendly housing and innovative community-based solutions.

The majority of the Commission's final recommendations reflect the recommendations from [York Region's Submission to the Ontario Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission](#).

York Region has already taken steps to strengthen operations at Newmarket Health Centre and Maple Health Centre, however, fully operationalizing changes resulting from the Commission's recommendations will require significant funding, guidance and support from the Province. York Region will continue to advocate for seniors' needs, influence decision-making and plan and support key players across the sector to address issues related to the aging population.

New framework for Community Investment Fund

Regional Council approved a [new framework](#) for the [Community Investment Fund](#) program which supports non-profit agencies to deliver local initiatives that address service gaps and complement Regional services.

The Community Investment Fund is an important part of York Region's human service system, addressing gaps in community needs through targeted, time-limited funding to local initiatives delivered by not-for-profit agencies.

Changes to the Community Investment Program include:

- Broadening target population beyond income threshold to include other priority groups
- Enabling participation in multi-sectoral partnerships to respond to complex human services issues
- Diversifying methods for selecting projects
- Investing in pandemic response and recovery, and capacity building for new and small organizations
- Prioritizing initiatives that help implement the Community Safety and Well-being Plan for York Region
- Ongoing funding for Seasonal Shelters will be included in the 2022 Budget

Implementation will begin in 2022 and include recommended funding extensions to stabilize the sector. To support transition and as the community continues to respond to COVID-19, a six-month extension to current projects has been approved.

Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7

Regional Council adopted a motion regarding [Regional Official Plan Amendment No. 7](#) which proposes to change the land-use designation from Agricultural Area to Rural/Major Open Space Area. This change would permit passive parkland, trails and other recreation uses within portions of the Protected Countryside designation of the Provincial Greenbelt Plan

The purpose and intent of ROPA 7 is to permit active urban parkland, trails and other recreational uses adjacent to residential neighbourhoods.

York Region participates in Intake 2 of the Provincial Audit and Accountability Fund

Through the Audit and Accountability Fund (AAF), the Government of Ontario is working in partnership with large municipalities to fund service delivery and administrative expenditure reviews to find efficiencies while protecting front-line services.

Through this program, municipalities are required to use the approved funding to hire independent third-party consultants to review municipal services delivery expenditures and identify efficiencies. Following the review, a final report must be submitted to the province outlining their third-party reviewers analysis, findings and actional recommendations.

To date the province has administered two rounds of funding, with a third underway.

In November 2019, York Region received \$250,000 in funding through AAF Intake 1 to complete the [Public Health Administrative Efficiencies Review](#).

In February 2021, York Region received confirmation of up to \$400,000 in funding for two additional projects under the AAF Intake 2. This funding supported the independent third-party reviews and reports for:

- [Provincial Offences Courts Modernization Opportunities](#)
- [York Trax Modernization Opportunities](#)

The specific and actionable recommendations for cost savings captured within the Courts and YorkTrax Modernization Opportunities reports will be considered through York Region's budget process.

Small Business Week

Regional Council celebrated Small Business Week from October 17 to 23, 2021, recognizing the contributions of entrepreneurs and small business across Canada.

Small businesses are the backbone of the local economy and make up more than 80% of all businesses in York Region. These businesses provide good quality jobs and contribute to prosperous and competitive communities.

Over the past 19 months local businesses have faced many challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have also demonstrated strength and resilience as they have worked to find creative ways to keep their doors open and continue serving the community.

As York Region continues to respond to the health and economic impacts of COVID-19, residents are reminded of the importance of supporting local businesses. By shopping in our own neighbourhoods, we can each contribute to a vibrant and successful business community.

To learn more about supports for small businesses, visit yorklink.ca/smallbusiness

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of Waste Reduction Week

Regional Council celebrated the 20th anniversary of [Waste Reduction Week](#) from October 18 to 24, 2021, marking environmental efforts and inspiring new innovative ideas and solutions for waste reduction across Canada.

Every year since 2012, York Region has ranked number one for diversion in large urban municipalities with over 90% of our waste diverted from landfill.

Further successes through our [SM4RT Living Waste Management Plan](#) include:

- [Municipal textile collections](#) supporting local reuse charities resulted in 1,794 tonnes of textiles collected in 2020
- The [Lendery](#), a series of lending libraries, now has three locations in partnership with the City of Markham, City of Vaughan and Town of Newmarket
- The [Good Food](#) program is one of the first municipal food waste reduction education programs supported by a unique partnership between York Region's Waste Management, Public Health and Economic Development services
- [Circular Economy Initiatives Fund](#) provided \$100,000 in funding to [six non-profit organizations](#) to support them advancing the circular economy; for 2021 funding recipients and projects
- Circular Cities and Regions Initiative, working with other Canadian municipalities to identify and implement circular policies in our operations

Residents are encouraged to reflect on what they can do to reduce their waste and support Waste Reduction Week's mission to mitigate climate change, water pollution and preserve our natural resources.

Commemorating the 7th anniversary of attack on the National War Memorial

Regional Council commemorated the 7th anniversary of the attack on the National War Memorial and Parliament Hill, which claimed the life of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, a sentry at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, along with the attack in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec where Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent also lost his life.

Regional Council marked this sombre anniversary by sharing support and sympathies with the family and friends of Corporal Cirillo, Warrant Officer Vincent and all those affected by this senseless act of violence.

United Nations Day

Regional Council recognized October 24, 2021 as [United Nations Day](#).

Celebrated annually around the world, United Nations Day recognizes this global organization dedicated to disaster relief, humanitarian aid, peacekeeping and international unity.

On the 76th anniversary of United Nations Day, Regional Council also celebrated on-going collaboration with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) on initiatives to promote [diversity and inclusion](#) in York Region.

Remembering Hershel Weinberg

Regional Council extended condolences following the passing of former York Region Commissioner of Planning Hershel Weinberg on October 15, 2021.

Appointed Commissioner of Planning by York Regional Council in September 1976, Mr. Weinberg served in this role for 16 years until his retirement in 1992. During this time, Mr. Weinberg was closely involved in the development of the York Durham Sewage System which helped position York Region as one of the fastest growing municipalities in Canada.

On behalf of York Region's 1.2 million residents, Regional Council offered condolences and support to Mr. Weinberg's wife, Markham-Unionville Member of Parliament and former York Region Medical Officer of Health the Honourable Dr. Helena Jaczek, and his extended family and friends.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, November 25, 2021 at 9 a.m. To maintain physical distancing and protect the health and well-being of residents, this is currently planned to be a virtual meeting and 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 1.2 million residents and 54,000 businesses with over 650,000 employees. More information about the Region's key service areas is available at york.ca/regionalservices

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