

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Tuesday, September 29, 2020

York Regional Council – Thursday, September 24, 2020

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's continuing response to COVID-19

The Regional Municipality of York embraced the Ontario government's decision on September 19, 2020 to limit the size of [private social gatherings](#) to 25 people outdoors and 10 people indoors.

Based on the advice of York Region Medical Officer of Health Dr. Karim Kurji and increased local cases of COVID-19, York Regional Council remains committed to protecting the health and safety of all residents while continuing to take prudent measures to help stop the spread of this virus.

During the [September 10, 2020 meeting of Committee of the Whole](#) and the [September 24, 2020 meeting of Regional Council](#), Dr. Kurji reported despite the best efforts of residents to follow public health advice, York Region is seeing an increase of COVID-19 cases primarily related to private gatherings. Specifically, Dr. Kurji acknowledged York Region may be at the beginning of a second COVID-19 wave.

In response, York Region continues to engage in public education activities reminding residents the fight against COVID-19 is not over. Now, more than ever, all York Region residents need to remain vigilant to keep themselves, their families, friends and communities safe. COVID-19 remains a very dangerous virus. The situation can quickly change if residents do not do their part by staying at home when sick, maintaining physical distancing, washing hands frequently with soap and water and wearing a [two-layer non-medical mask in indoor locations](#) across the Region.

In further efforts to help stop the spread of COVID-19, York Region continues to work with school board partners, parents and the community on the safe re-opening of schools. Public health professionals, including public health nurses, will continue to support schools throughout the year as they implement plans, adjust and adapt to ensure a successful, healthy and safe school year.

To keep parents and the community advised of the most current COVID-19 cases in the school system, York Region Public Health added confirmed and under surveillance COVID-19 case information in schools on the interactive dashboard at york.ca/covid19data

Confirmed outbreaks are declared in a school setting when, within a 14-day period, there are two or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in students, staff or other visitors with an epidemiological link (if cases are in the same class or cohort) or if at least one case could have been infected in the school.

Regional Council also received an [update](#) on York Region's Social Services response to COVID-19, including new trends and issues, key changes to federal and provincial supports and updates on

Regional actions. Regional staff continue to adapt and deliver programs and services to complement other government initiatives that address social service needs, including:

- Continued operation of a self-isolation shelter in the Town of East Gwillimbury
- Extended the contract for the temporary transitional shelter at Kingbridge Conference Centre and Hotel in the Township of King until at least the end of 2020
- Distributed 50,000 disposable masks to lower income households through the [COVID-19 Community Coordination table](#) and working on the further distribution of 300,000 reusable masks to vulnerable residents through community agencies and social services programs
- Concluded contracted services with six [emergency child care](#) providers who provided child care for essential front-line workers during the COVID-19 global pandemic

York Region is receiving \$14.2 million to support a safe and adequate supply of child care for families as the economy re-opens. This announcement is part of the \$19 billion Canada/Ontario [Safe Restart Agreement](#) and subsequent provincial funding commitments announced in July 2020 to assist local economies during the pandemic.

Additional provincial funding was announced on July 6, 2020 to provide long-term care homes with continued COVID-19 Prevention and Containment Funding. As of July 31, 2020, the Region's two homes have received a total of \$290,800. The province has not indicated the total amount of future funding the homes are expected to receive. Regional staff will continue to monitor community needs and their impact on Regional programs and will bring forward any funding pressures or opportunities as part of the 2021 budget process.

Breaking ground on Markham Centre Campus

On Tuesday, September 22, 2020, York Region joined the City of Markham and York University to officially break ground on York University's Markham Centre Campus.

Once complete, the new campus will bring 4,200 new student spaces to York Region, strengthen opportunities for students and showcase York Region as a destination of choice for higher learning.

In 2015, Regional Council confirmed their support of the Markham Centre Campus by authorizing York Region to enter into a funding agreement to provide up to \$25 million in capital funding towards the new campus. This commitment was reaffirmed in July 2020, with the Ontario government's official announcement to move forward with construction of the campus.

Bringing a university campus to the City of Markham has been a long-standing priority for Regional Council. Engaging in post-secondary attraction is a key goal in [York Region's Economic Development Action Plan](#), which aims to create new opportunities for research, innovation and business growth.

York Region increases Council with new member

Regional Council enacted a [bylaw](#) to change the composition of York Regional Council to include an additional representative from the City of Vaughan.

The Province of Ontario, through the [Municipal Act](#), requires all municipal councils to review their council composition by no later than mid-way through each four-year council term. The deadline to complete this review is December 2020.

Regional Council first considered this on [February 27, 2020](#) and began the process of obtaining triple majority approval.

A triple majority is attained when the following three factors are met:

- A majority of Regional Council votes in favor of the bylaw
- A majority of the nine local municipal councils pass a resolution consenting to the bylaw
- The total numbers of voters in the local municipalities that have passed resolutions represents a majority of all electors in York Region

On [June 11, 2020](#), Council received a report containing resolutions from all nine local municipalities, meeting the requirements for the second two components of the triple majority process.

To complete the triple majority process, a public meeting on the composition of Regional Council was held on September 17, 2020.

Following this meeting, Regional Council enacted the bylaw to change its composition by adding a fifth member representing the City of Vaughan - a change that will be in effect for the 2022 Municipal Election.

Improving traveller options on York Region Transit

Regional Council received an [update](#) on new PRESTO features to further modernize the current system on York Region Transit (YRT) and move towards supporting an integrated Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) transit system.

[PRESTO](#), an electronic fare payment system introduced 10 years ago, is undergoing some enhancements. A device refresh is currently underway and will replace 250 payment devices across the Region. The devices have an updated design with larger screens and enhanced features. Future updates will also include quicker loading of customer payment, eliminating the 24-hour waiting period and a debit and electronic fare payment options.

Regional Council also approved changes to [York Region Transit's \(YRT\) fare categories](#), making the fare structure consistent with other GTHA transit agencies, an important step towards fare integration.

Subject to 2021 budget approval, starting June 27, 2021 changes to YRT's fare categories include free transit for all children up to the age of five and eliminating the high school student requirement for those between the ages of 13 to 19.

Metrolinx and the 11 transit agencies in the GTHA continue to work towards a regional fare and service integration strategy, which would include the development of full fare and service integration and initiatives. This includes eliminating two-fare payment between the 905 area, TTC and GO transit, and implementing cross-boundary service to create operational efficiencies and improve the traveller experience.

Greater Toronto Area West Transportation Corridor preferred route identified

Regional Council received an [update](#) on the Ministry of Transportation's preferred route for the Greater Toronto West Transportation Corridor.

The previous proposed alignment presented by the Ministry of Transportation identified the highway in the North Kleinburg-Nashville Secondary Plan area. The new [preferred route](#) now includes better alignment between Highway 50 and Highway 27 with less impact to existing and planned communities.

When complete, the GTA West highway and transitway will provide more east-west travel options. Proposed interchange locations in York Region include a partial interchange at Weston Road and a full interchange at Highway 27 in the City of Vaughan.

Also aligned with the GTA West Transportation Corridor Assessment Study Area, the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines has initiated the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor

Study. York Region will continue to consult with the province and local municipal partners throughout the GTA West Transportation Corridor Environmental Assessment Study and the Northwest GTA Transmission Corridor Study to protect a corridor of land for future electricity infrastructure.

York Region 2020 Credit Rating update

York Region's [credit rating](#) has been re-affirmed by Moody's Investor Service and S&P Global Ratings based on the Region's financial management and fiscal strategy approved by Regional Council.

Moody's has issued its highest credit rating of Aaa with stable outlook for York Region for the 20th consecutive year. This is based on:

- A high level of cash investments
- Ability to generate strong operating outcomes
- Strong debt affordability supported by a low interest rate environment
- Ability to generate predictable revenues supported by a wealthy and diverse tax base

S&P Global Ratings re-affirmed its AA+ rating for York Region, despite the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both rating agencies find York Region's strong financial management, stable property tax base and budgetary flexibility in part attributable to prudent saving in operating reserves will help cushion the impact and help guide it through this difficult economic time.

These ratings contribute to York Region's ability to access the capital markets and borrow at low rates.

Provision of closed meeting investigation services and ombudsman services

Regional Council approved the [Ontario Ombudsman](#) to begin providing services effective January 1, 2021.

In 2015, Regional Council [appointed ADR Chambers Inc. as the Ombudsman for The Regional Municipality of York](#). This five-year appointment provided opportunity for additional accountability and transparency in the municipal sector.

This contract concludes December 31, 2020,

The *Municipal Act, 2001* requires all municipalities to have an investigator to act on complaints about a meeting being improperly closed to the public. Since 2007, York Region has retained Local Authority Services Limited (LAS) to provide this service.

Switching to the Ontario Ombudsman for closed meeting investigation services represents a cost-savings for the Region.

Funding received to support substance misuse programs

York Region received \$193,600 through [Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program Funding Grant](#). The project grant will be used for the [Training Youth Allies to Engage Youth and Young Adults to Talk about Cannabis](#). The project will build on York Region's on-going efforts to increase awareness on reducing and preventing harms with cannabis use and will run from October 2020 to December 2022.

York Region will oversee distribution of project funds, provide in kind supports and report back to Health Canada.

Update on *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act*, 2020

Regional Council supports the province's efforts under the [Community Housing Renewal Strategy](#) to ensure a more streamlined and sustainable community housing system that can grow and respond to residents' needs.

The Act will have significant [implications](#) for York Region as a community housing service manager. These changes, to be enacted through regulations in the coming years, include service level standards, wait lists and local eligibility rules, as well as new options for housing providers responsible for the funding, administration and planning of the community housing system.

Engaging service managers in developing the regulations on a government-to-government basis will ensure service managers are recognized as the primary funders of the system and are best positioned to determine local needs.

Regional Council supports Major Transit Station Report

Regional Council endorsed the [proposed Major Transit Station Area](#) (MTSA) boundaries, minimum density targets and policy directions as part of the Regional Official Plan update. In addition, Regional Council [amended this report](#) to include:

- A request to the provincial government to approve alternative density targets for the Highway 407 Subway Station and King City GO Station MTSA
- Direction for regional staff to delineate boundaries and set density targets for future MTSA stations along Jane Street in the City of Vaughan
- Referral of the Rutherford Road GO Station MTSA to the City of Vaughan for additional consideration of boundaries and density
- Expansion of the boundary around the [Maple GO Station MTSA](#) to include the 2.8-hectare parcel of land at the north east corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and McNaughton Road in the City of Vaughan
- A minimum density target for the [Gormley GO Station MTSA](#) at 50 people and jobs per hectare

Regional Council supported the identification of [72 Major Transit Station Areas](#) in [March 2020](#), along with two additional Major Transit Station Areas in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and along Jane Street in the City of Vaughan.

The [Ontario Growth Plan](#) requires York Region to outline and set minimum density targets for major transit station areas. These targets are taken into consideration based on different levels of transit service and the potential to develop lands within the major transit station area.

Feedback from local municipalities, stakeholder, external partner and public consultations informed the final proposed Major Transit Station Areas. Consultations suggested residents are generally supportive of the increased density, mixed-use and transit-oriented development, support for increased transportation options and walkable communities in urban areas.

Final Major Transit Station Area delineations, minimum density targets and a Major Transit Station Area policy framework will be incorporated into the Region's updated Official Plan scheduled for completion in mid-2021.

York Region development activity increases in 2020 despite COVID-19 pandemic

Regional Council received the [Mid-Year Development Activity Summary 2020 report](#) providing an overview of York Region's planning and development approvals in the first half of 2020.

Development Charge revenue in mid-year 2020 totals \$102,44,127, a 127% increase from 2019. This demonstrates York Region's growth and economic vitality, despite unforeseen challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional 2020 mid-year highlights include:

- Application re-submissions increased by 43% totaling 369 compared to 258 in 2019
- Proposed residential units of subdivision applications increased to 4,801 in the first half of 2020 from 1,220 in the first half of 2019
- York Region received 235 new development applications for review in the first half of 2020

Planning and development activity continued undisturbed during the COVID-19 pandemic as York Region has been able to process applications through YorkTrax, York Region's online development approval system that offers an innovative online approach to review and approve applications.

York Region will continue to work closely with local municipal partners to achieve Regional and local policy objectives to ensure Regional priorities are identified early in the planning process.

York Region approves Township of King Official Plan

York Regional Council approved the updated [King Township Official Plan, 2019](#) with [modifications](#) and [deferrals](#).

The updated Official Plan is required to be consistent with the [Provincial Policy Statement](#) and conform with provincial plans which include the [Ontario Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#), the [Greenbelt Plan](#), the [Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan](#), the [Lake Simcoe Protection Plan](#) and the [York Region Official Plan](#).

In partnership with King Township, York Region worked to replace the previous *Township Official Plan, 1970* with the purpose of managing growth, land use ensuring environmental conservation and protection, protecting the agricultural land base, facilitating economic development, promoting cultural and heritage values and identifying future infrastructure requirements and investment.

Additional amendments will occur after York Region's [Municipal Comprehensive Review](#) and updated Regional Official Plan, scheduled for completion in mid-2021.

Re-naming of York Regional Police training facility

On Wednesday, September 9, 2020, a ceremony was held to re-name the York Regional Police Training and Education Bureau to the [Eric Jolliffe Training Centre for Leadership and Learning](#).

On April 30, 2020, members of Regional Council unanimously agreed to re-name this facility in honor of the legacy and leadership of former York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe, who dedicated his more than 40-year career to the safety and well-being of the community and residents he served.

At over 89,000 square feet, the centre offers more than 70 practical, simulation and in-class training programs for York Regional Police and officers from across the country.

Naming the facility in honour of former Chief Jolliffe is a lasting recognition of his dedication to life-long learning and professional education.

Change to Alternate Regional Fire Coordinator

James Arnold, Deputy Fire Chief of King City Fire Services is one of [two alternates](#) supporting Regional Fire Coordinator Ian Laing, Chief of Central York Fire Services.

The position of Regional Fire Coordinator has been in place since 1971 to coordinate fire aid within York Region and the role is appointed by the Provincial Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management.

National Day of Service

On the 19th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Regional Council honoured the nearly 3,000 innocent lives lost and offered condolences to all who lost loved ones in this horrific act of violence.

In the initial moments, hours and days following the 9/11 attacks, firefighters, police officers, paramedics and military personnel risked everything so others may live. At the same time, Canadians demonstrated the true spirit of Canada by opening their homes, offering support and standing in solidarity with our American neighbours.

On the [National Day of Service](#) Regional Council paid tribute to these heroes and every first responder who continues to make sacrifices in service to their communities.

National Forest Week

From September 20 to 26, 2020, York Regional Council celebrated the 100th anniversary of [National Forest Week](#).

Home to 2,300 hectares of protected land, the York Regional Forest plays a vital role in the lives of York Region residents.

Through *National Forest Week*, York Region celebrates our shared forest heritage and recognizes the importance of this valuable and renewable resource. Forests provide economic, environmental, recreational and cultural value to our communities and are fundamental to our traditions, history and our future. Together, it is our shared responsibility to protect this essential natural resource and do our part to keep it clean for future generations.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority recognized with visionary award

The [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority](#) (TRCA) and its nine partner municipalities, including York Region, have been recognized with a 2020 Sustainable Communities Award from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The Honourable Mention in the Visionary Award category celebrates TRCA's [Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program](#), which aims to accelerate the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods in older urban areas through urban renewal and climate action.

Aligned with Regional Council's vision of [complete communities](#), the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program was designed to help municipalities improve efficiencies, draw strong community support and build implementation partnerships when developing sustainable and resilient neighbourhoods.

York Region receives innovation award for YorkTrax

York Region was recognized by the [Association of Municipalities Ontario](#) and received a Certificate of Merit from the [Peter J. Marshall Innovation Award Jury](#) for YorkTrax, presented at the [2020 AMO Conference](#). YorkTrax is an innovative online approach to review and approve development applications that modernizes the day-to-day work of York Region and improves the customer experience.

York Region processes a number of development applications every year, each one involving many documents, data, maps and comments from multiple departments. YorkTrax was developed to make this process more efficient and coordinated across the organization. YorkTrax standardized the development review process and created transparency across departments ensuring better coordination of comments and approvals.

The project demonstrated many of the P.J. Marshall Award's criteria of innovation, tangible benefits to the community, improved efficiency and the ability for other municipal governments to use the project's concept.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition for development applications was seamless as staff were able to access the system remotely and were able to move forward with development review and approvals process.

Show Your Local Love Day

Regional Council has proclaimed September 25, 2020 as "[Show Your Local Love Day](#)" in York Region.

Show Your Local Love Day, an initiative of the [United Way Greater Toronto](#), aims to show support for individuals and families impacted by the COVID-19 global pandemic and demonstrate the essential need for a strong network of community support services.

York Region has a long-standing partnership with the United Way, working in collaboration to support the most vulnerable residents in the community. These include individuals and families faced with isolation, high-risk seniors, unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness and people facing food insecurity.

As the charity of choice for York Region, staff have raised more than \$6 million for the United Way over the past 26 years.

Show Your Local Love Day is an opportunity for all York Region staff and residents to learn more about the work of the United Way and make a difference in the lives of many in the community.

Remembering Aline Chrétien and John Turner

Regional Council extended condolences following the passing of Aline Chrétien on September 13, 2020 and former Prime Minister, John Turner on September 19, 2020.

Married to former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien for more than 63 years, Aline was a trusted partner and advisor and a strong matriarch to her family and our great nation.

As the 17th Prime Minister of Canada, The Right Honourable John Turner led Canada from June to September 1984. Despite a short tenure as Prime Minister, Mr. Turner held a long and distinguished political career and was a fierce defender of democracy.

On behalf of York Region's 1.2 million residents, Council extended condolences and support to both the Chrétien and Turner families.

Next regular meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, October 22, 2020 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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