



100 John West Way  
Aurora, Ontario  
L4G 6J1  
(905) 727-3123  
aurora.ca

Town of Aurora  
**Memorandum**  
Office of the Mayor

---

**Subject:** York Regional Council Highlights of October 22, 2020

**To:** Members of Council

**From:** Mayor Mrakas

**Date:** November 24, 2020

---

### **Recommendation**

- 1. That the York Regional Council Highlights of October 22, 2020, be received for information.**

# COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Wednesday, October 28, 2020

York Regional Council – Thursday, October 22, 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](http://York.ca/councilandcommittee)

---

## **York Region placed under Modified Stage 2 restrictions**

Effective Monday, October 19, 2020 at 12:01 a.m., the Government of Ontario placed The Regional Municipality of York under [Modified Stage 2 COVID-19 restrictions](#) for a minimum period of 28 days.

These modified restrictions include the closure of:

- Indoor food and drink service in restaurants, bars, nightclubs and food courts in malls
- Indoor gyms, dance studios and fitness centres
- Casinos, bingo halls and other gaming establishments
- Indoor cinemas
- Performing arts centres and venues
- Spectator areas in racing venues
- Interactive exhibits or exhibits with high risk of personal contact, such as museums, galleries, zoos, science centres, and landmarks
- Prohibiting personal care services where face coverings must be removed for the service (e.g. make-up application, beard trimming)
- Jury selection for provincial court trials
- Short-term and temporary absences of Long-Term Care Centre residents for social or personal reasons

Additional restrictions include:

- Limits for all social gatherings and organized public events
- Reduced capacity limits for real estate open houses and guided tours
- Team sports limited to training sessions, which includes for games or scrimmages

York Region is working with our nine local cities and towns to communicate Modified Stage 2 restrictions. Through a collaborative approach and the strong support of municipal bylaw services, enforcement of these restrictions is critical to curtail the continued spread of COVID-19 in the community.

The impacts of COVID-19 continue to affect everyone, including individuals, families and businesses across York Region. It is vital to follow the public health measures in place, including staying at home when feeling ill, maintaining physical distancing, washing your hands frequently with soap and water, limiting gatherings to those in your immediate household and wearing a face mask or covering when physical distancing is not possible.

As York Region continues to navigate these new restrictions, York Regional Council will continue to work with partners in the provincial government to monitor emerging COVID-19 trends within our communities.

---

### **York Region's continuing response to COVID-19**

Regional Council received an [update](#) on York Region's continuing response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Since declaring a [state of emergency](#) on March 23, 2020, York Region has taken a coordinated and supported approach to minimize COVID-19 impacts on residents and communities.

In the initial wave of COVID-19, York Region opened the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) and activated the REOC action plan to:

- Provide regular COVID-19 updates through York Region's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Karim Kurji
- Develop an integrated approach for mitigating the negative economic impact on local businesses and residents
- Make a request to suspend/amend sections of *Municipal Act* to provide more targeted, application-based financial relief to local businesses
- Close all offices to the public and providing services to residents through modified means, including online and telephone
- Continue collaboration with municipalities, partner agencies and health care organizations

While the health and well-being of residents and the community remains Regional Council's top priority, services essential to residents continue to operate. Some of these include: Public Health, Access York, Long-Term Care, Paramedic Services, Social Services, Transit, Regional Roads and Water and Wastewater.

As York Region moves through the various stages of the [provincial re-opening plan](#), additional services and programs have also resumed. These include additional public health programs and counter service of the [Provincial Offences Courts](#). Most recently, provincially imposed Modified Stage 2 restrictions have resulted in the further re-prioritization of service and programs to support York Region's on-going pandemic response. A full list of service disruptions and program closures is available at [york.ca/closures](http://york.ca/closures)

Collaboration with federal, provincial and community partners continues to support York Region's most vulnerable populations and those facing additional hardship as a result of COVID-19. Through various financial aid programs and the work of community support tables, York Region has distributed more than 300,000 non-medical face masks to low-income and vulnerable residents. In addition, Regional staff continue to adapt and deliver programs and services to compliment other government initiatives to address social services needs in the community.

Included in the COVID-19 updates to Regional Council was an [analysis of the financial information](#). The unexpected costs and reduced revenue associated with COVID-19 have a cumulative impact of \$101.5 million to date, or approximately \$3.4 million per week.

[Travel patterns](#) in York Region continue to be affected by COVID-19. While daily traffic volumes have gradually increased since the re-opening of business and service in early May, these numbers remain lower than pre-pandemic times.

The number of travellers using York Region Transit (YRT)/Viva services has also decreased as a result of the pandemic. While YRT/Viva buses running on Regional roads are starting to experience an increase in ridership they continue generating lower annual revenue.

COVID-19 has affected [Land Use Planning and Community Design](#). Shifts to telework and additional time connected online have impacted commute patterns, demand for larger and more flexible living spaces, access to open and green spaces, change in retail, office and employment spaces and an increasing demand for lands to accommodate warehouse centres.

Longer term data and evidence are still needed to fully assess COVID-19 impacts on land use planning and the design of livable, complete and resilient communities.

As York Region continues to respond to COVID-19, Regional Council remains committed to supporting strong, caring and safe communities. Throughout this crisis, York Region has maintained [york.ca/covid19](http://york.ca/covid19) as a trusted source of information related to public health and safety.

Regional staff will continue to monitor community needs and their impact on Regional programs and services and will continue to update Regional Council and the community on the on-going response.

---

### **Council votes to maintain status quo in appointment of Regional Chair**

In a [motion](#) deferred from the [February 6, 2020](#) Committee of the Whole meeting, Regional Council voted against the direct election of the Regional Chair position.

In defeating this motion, Regional Council will maintain the current approach of appointing the Regional Chair. Section 4 of the Region's [Procedural Bylaw](#) sets out the process for appointing the Regional Chair, which must be confirmed by vote at the inaugural meeting of Regional Council.

Since York Region was established in 1971, the Regional Chair has been appointed by members of Regional Council. Similar motions were defeated by Council in 2012 and 2016.

---

### **Proposed Employment Area Mapping and Employment Conversions**

Regional Council received several [proposed employment land conversions](#) with a number of [potential conversions](#) along the 400-series highways.

The [Provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#) and [Provincial Policy Statement](#) require municipalities to plan for future employment by ensuring land is available in appropriate locations to accommodate planned Regional growth. Seventy site-specific requests for employment area conversions and proposed employment area mapping were laid out in the recent [conversion report](#). After extensive discussion, Council supported [24 conversion requests](#), with an additional eight determined to not require an employment area conversion.

Additional employment lands along the 400-series highways have also been highlighted as potential space for growth and further job creation in York Region. The [Potential for Employment Lands Along 400 Series Highways report](#) requests the province to develop a process for municipalities to access strategically located employment lands, if necessary, through the Municipal Comprehensive Review. Much of these lands are protected by the [Greenbelt Plan](#).

Work on the [Regional Official Plan](#) continues through the [Municipal Comprehensive Review](#) with public feedback and engagement opportunities available at [york.ca/haveyoursay](http://york.ca/haveyoursay)

---

## **York University Markham Centre Campus set to open in 2023**

Regional Council received an [update](#) from York University President and Vice Chancellor Dr. Rhonda Lenton on the construction of the [York University Markham Centre Campus](#).

Since 2014, Regional Council has advocated for the expansion of post-secondary opportunities in York Region, committing \$25 million to the development of a university campus in the City of Markham. 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.

With approval from the Government of Ontario, York Region, the City of Markham and York University officials broke ground on the Markham Centre Campus on Tuesday, September 22, 2020.

When the new campus opens in September 2023 it will bring 4,200 new student spaces to York Region, strengthen opportunities for students in a provincially designated growth centre and contribute \$54 million annually to the provincial economy.

---

## **Municipal Streetscape and Pedestrian and Cycling update**

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.

Through the 2020 budget, the following projects were funded:

- **\$144,332:** A gateway feature/paved plaza at the southwest corner of Yonge Street and St. John's Sideroad in the Town of Aurora
- **\$24,269:** A gateway to enable completion of landscape works surrounding the sign feature for the Bathurst Street and Davis Drive in the Town of Newmarket
- **\$172,200:** Bike Paths on either side of Clark Avenue between Jason Street/David Lewis Drive and Yonge Street in the City of Vaughan for Clark Avenue
- **\$327,800:** Phase 2 of the Bathurst Street and Davis Drive multi-use path in the Town of Newmarket

Since its launch in 2006, almost 75 projects totalling more than \$10 million have been funded.

---

## **York Region response to major changes to the *Environmental Assessment Act***

The [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act](#) (Bill 197), introduced significant changes to both Class and Individual Environmental Assessment processes. The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks now has authority to create new regulations that would replace all Class Environmental Assessments.

Changes under the *Act* will move to an approach where only the projects identified on a list will be subject to environmental assessment requirements.

It has been the Region's experience there can be unintended consequences directly related to significant delays experienced with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks issuing environmental assessment approvals for critical municipal infrastructure projects. Examples include:

- Duffin Creek outfall upgrade was a Schedule C Municipal Class Environmental Assessment which took nine years to receive approval
- Southeast Collector Trunk Sewer took more than a decade to receive a decision on the Environmental Assessment

The Region's [response](#) on the changes include key concerns for timelines, accountability and increased costs.

Addressing these items is critical to the Region's ability to achieve growth targets under the [Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#). By speeding up infrastructure approvals, municipalities can avoid excessive costs associated with protracted delays and focus on delivering critical infrastructure that contributes to Ontario's economic prosperity.

---

### **2019 waste diversion from landfill goal exceeded at 94%**

York Region has again achieved 94% diversion from landfill based on the release of the [2019 Annual Waste Management Report](#), exceeding the Official Plan goal of 90%. This includes all tonnes from local city and town curbside collection programs, waste depot diversion programs and tonnes managed through energy-from-waste.

Since 2012, York Region and our local cities and towns have ranked first in urban municipal diversion. York Region is committed to the four R's of recycling, reducing, reusing and recovering energy-from-waste.

Highlights of the 2019 Annual Waste Management Report include:

- Organics and garbage generation rates have remained steady over the past five years
- York Region continues to prepare for full transition of the Blue Box Program to producer responsibility
- As a result of the transition, reporting the waste generation rate will now focus on green bin and garbage streams only
- While green bin and garbage generation reported for 2019 is encouraging, impacts from COVID-19 will undoubtedly influence trends moving forward; York Region has remained flexible in its response to COVID-19 system impacts

Based on diversion rates as well as the commitment to waste reduction and reuse efforts, the Region and its local municipal partners are well placed to move towards its visionary goal of a world with no waste. For more information on York Region's waste reduction initiatives, visit [york.ca/sm4rtliving](http://york.ca/sm4rtliving)

---

### **2019 Long-Term Care and Seniors Annual Performance Updates**

Regional Council received an update on the performance of the Region's two [long-term care homes](#).

Key findings in the report include:

- In 2019, the homes continued to provide high-quality care to residents and made several improvements in response to the [Long-Term Care Homes Public Inquiry Report findings](#)
- Seniors Community Programs continued to support seniors to age in place by providing much needed services and caregiver relief
- Accreditation for Long-Term Care and Seniors Community Programs will be conducted virtually in November 2020

The global pandemic continues to change how care is delivered at the Region's long-term care homes. With admissions being paused, the waitlist for each home has increased and additional resources needed to respond adequately to protect the safety and well-being of residents and staff and continue providing high quality care.

---



## **Community Investment Fund Activity Report**

Regional Council received an [update](#) on the activity of the [2019 Community Investment Fund](#) which promotes community health, safety and well-being by supporting local projects and initiatives that respond to community needs and fill service gaps, including those resulting from and exacerbated by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, more than 66,000 residents were supported through the [Community Investment Fund's](#) four Community Results Areas.

For 2021, Regional Council approved [42 community projects and funding for initiatives](#) to support York Region's not-for-profit community agency sector.

---

### **Metrolinx Queen Street and Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit Update**

As Metrolinx is completing its [Queen Street and Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit Planning Study and Initial Business Case](#), York Region remains an active participant of the technical advisory committee.

When complete, the project will connect downtown Brampton to the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, which includes a connection to the Spadina Subway Station. Regional Council remain supportive of the Queen Street-Highway 7 Bus Rapid Transit project only if significant capital funding contributions are not expected from York Region at this time.

The Planning Study and Initial Business Case are expected to be released fall 2020. Meetings with the involved communities will take place as part of the preliminary design phase to take local opinion into account during the design.

---

### **Policing in a changing environment**

Regional Council received an [update](#) from York Regional Police Chief Jim MacSween on policing in the community and the transitional role of policing in York Region.

As a one of the top police services in the country, York Regional Police are dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of residents, while safeguarding fundamental rights and respecting the diversity of the community.

In response to a growing population and changing demographics, York Regional Police continue to transform the way they serve the public through updated technology, community engagement, modernized policing and new approaches to mental health response protocols.

---

### **Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Budget and Priority Update**

Regional Council received a [2020 Budget update](#) from the [Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority](#) (LSRCA) and an outline of annual operating priorities.

As the leading environmental protection agency in the Lake Simcoe watershed, LSRCA works with the community, Regional Council and other partners to protect and restore the environmental health and quality of Lake Simcoe.

In 2020, LSRCA's priorities included the completion of floodplain mapping and a flood relief program, development of climate change mitigation strategies, fundraising for the new Scanlon Creek Nature Centre and implementation of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan.

The 2020 budget and priorities set out by LSRCA were developed prior to the provincial declaration of emergency and the emergence of COVID-19 in the community. Due to the uncertainties of the

pandemic, some of the planned work outlined in the 2020 priorities were impacted. LSRCA staff continue to track and report on the progress of these priorities and will provide Regional Council with an update in 2021.

Regional Council also recognized LSRCA Chief Administrative Officer Mike Walters for his 36 years of service to protecting and restoring the Lake Simcoe watershed, and offered congratulations and best wishes in his retirement.

---

### **York Regional Police Marine Unit Grand Opening**

On Monday, October 5, 2020, York Region and York Regional Police celebrated the official opening of the new York Regional Police Marine Unit in the Town of Georgina.

The new state-of-the-art facility is staffed by officers in York Regional Police District #3 and is responsible for patrolling 350 square kilometres of Lake Simcoe and other York Region waterways.

This new facility provides officers with the necessary equipment and resources required to respond to the needs of the lake community, while also providing high level police services for all who live, work and play on Lake Simcoe.

---

### **National Seniors Day**

Regional Council celebrated [National Seniors Day](#) on October 1, 2020 by honouring older adults and highlighting their valuable contributions to families, workplaces, communities and society.

In York Region, the population of seniors is growing faster than any other age group. By 2031, residents over the age of 65 will make up 21% of the population.

To best support the changing needs of this population, Regional Council endorsed the [York Region Seniors Strategy](#) in 2016. Seniors living in York Region make up a diverse group with varying life experiences and personal characteristics, and this strategy helps define the Region's role in serving older adults while balancing the needs of all residents.

---

### **World Mental Health Day**

Regional Council recognized Saturday, October 10, 2020 as [World Mental Health Day](#). Celebrated annually, World Mental Health Day raises awareness of mental health issues and mobilizes support for mental health services and resources around the world.

The past year has brought many challenges. The social isolation, economic impacts and fear and anxiety caused by the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on mental health around the world.

World Mental Health Day is an opportunity for all residents to take concrete actions to support their mental health, support friends and family who are struggling and support mental wellness in our homes, organizations and communities.

---

### **Ontario Agriculture Week**

From October 5 to 11, 2020 York Region celebrated [Ontario Agricultural Week](#) by thanking hard working farmers for the important role they play in supporting the economy.

York Region is home to more than 700 farm-based businesses and 270 food and beverage manufacturers. Together, these businesses contribute approximately 57,000 jobs and \$2.7 billion to the local economy. In addition to encouraging residents to eat and shop locally, Regional Council support



this vital sector through the [York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy](#) and the York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Group.

---

### **Small Business Week**

Regional Council recognized [Small Business Week](#) from October 18 to 24, 2020. Acknowledging small businesses as the backbone of the local economy, small business week offers an opportunity to thank local businesses for providing good-quality jobs and contributing to a prosperous and competitive York Region.

As York Region continues to respond to the health and economic impacts of COVID-10, residents are reminded of the importance of supporting local businesses as they work to protect the health and safety of the community while also striving to keep doors open during these challenging times.

---

### **Waste Reduction Week**

Regional Council recognized October 19 to 25, 2020 as [Waste Reduction Week](#) with a focus on the circular economy, resource efficiency and waste reduction.

As a leader in waste diversion, York Region has long advocated for an Ontario-wide effort to reduce litter and waste in the community. Regional Council welcomed the Ontario Government's [October 19, 2020 announcement](#) to develop a stronger and more effective blue box program in Ontario.

Under the proposed regulation, the provincial government will standardize and increase the list of materials accepted in the blue box, transition to producer responsibility, expand blue box services to more communities and set the highest waste diversion targets in North America.

---

### **United Nations Day**

Regional Council recognized October 24, 2020 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 75<sup>th</sup> 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.

---

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

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, November 19, 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](http://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](http://york.ca/regionalservices)