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Town of Aurora
Memorandum
Office of the Mayor

Subject: York Regional Council Highlights of June 30, 2022

To: Members of Council

From: Mayor Mrakas

Date: July 12, 2022

Recommendation

- 1. That the York Regional Council Highlights of June 30, 2022, be received for information.**

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York Regional Council Highlights from June 30, 2022

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, July 4, 2022

York Regional Council – Thursday, June 30, 2022

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



York Regional Council received an update on York Region's continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including an update on vaccination rates and current plans to ensure future waves of the virus do not have a significant impact on residents and businesses.

While COVID-19 virus activity began to decrease in early June 2022, wastewater surveillance data indicates York Region is beginning to experience a slight increase again, with the BA.5 subvariant driving transmission. Provincial and local data suggests the BA.5 subvariant, which is more transmissible but does not cause a more serious outcome, will be the dominate strain of COVID-19 in the weeks ahead.

As virus activity has slowed, capacity across York Region's local hospitals has stabilized, but remains high. York Region continues to work in collaboration with health care partners to monitor capacity and support local hospitals, where needed. York Region has also experienced an overall decrease in institutional and school related cases of COVID-19, with a slight uptick over the last week. York Region continues to work with congregate living facilities and local school boards to plan for the fall and winter months when indoor gatherings will increase.

Additional planning for an anticipated COVID-19 surge in the fall includes collaboration with a number of community and health care partners, along with building capacity to increase vaccination efforts, if necessary.

The role of public health is to prevent outbreaks, limit severe outcomes and deaths and reduce the burden of COVID-19 on the health care system. The most effective tool to accomplish this is vaccination. Regional Council and York Region Public Health continues to encourage residents to stay up to date on vaccines, including third and fourth dose booster vaccines.

Approximately 60% of all eligible York Region residents 12 years of age and older have now received a third dose vaccination and approximately 30% of residents 60 years of age and older have received a fourth dose vaccination. Those who are eligible, but have not yet received their first, second, third or fourth dose vaccination can walk into any York Region vaccination clinic or book an appointment at

More information about York Region's ongoing response to COVID-19 is available at york.ca/COVID19

York Region plans for more than 2 million residents and 1 million jobs by 2051

Regional Council [has adopted](#) the proposed [York Region Official Plan 2022](#), outlining the policies to plan York Region's communities over the next 30 years.

The York Region Official Plan includes updated policies to build [complete communities](#), promote affordable housing, achieve growth targets mandated by the province, designate employment lands, protect natural and agricultural systems and conform to provincial plans.

Public engagement with residents, York Region's nine cities and towns, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders supported Regional Official Plan development through the [Municipal Comprehensive Review](#) process, which included alignment with the [Transportation Master Plan](#), [Water and Wastewater Master Plan](#) updates and financial planning.

The revised plan includes updated policies in the following seven chapters:

- Introduction and Purpose
- The Foundation for Complete Communities
- A Sustainable Natural Environment
- An Urbanizing Region
- Supporting the Agricultural System
- Servicing Our Communities
- Implementation of the Official Plan

With Regional Council's adoption, the updated Regional Official Plan will be submitted to the [Province of Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing](#) for approval. Once approved by the province, local municipal partners will have one year to update Local Municipal Official Plans to conform to the York Region Official Plan.

To stay updated on the York Region Official Plan, visit york.ca/regionalofficialplan

Regional Council approved the [Paramedic Services Master Plan 2021 to 2031](#), the Region's long-term roadmap to continue providing excellent paramedicine care over the next 10 years.

The plan was developed with experts in emergency services and replaces *York Region Emergency Medical Services 10-Year Resources and Facilities Master Plan approved by Council in September 2012*. The new plan identifies resources and key provincial reforms needed to respond to future demands and meet legislative and Council-approved and equitable response time targets.

As York Region's population continues to grow and age, the demand for paramedic services is projected to increase by approximately 7% annually to 2031. To support additional paramedic staffing requirements, \$62.3 million is required. York Region's contribution is approximately \$31 million, assuming the provincial land ambulance grants continue to fund 50% of operational costs. Additionally, \$27.2 million will be required to fund capital expenses like new stations, ambulances and special response units.

York Region will regularly review the plan and will make resource adjustments where appropriate. York Region will begin developing capital and operating budget plans, with the implementation of the Master Plan expected to begin in early 2023.

For more information, visit york.ca/paramedics

2022 Fiscal sustainability update

Regional Council received a [mid-year update](#) of the [2022 Fiscal Strategy](#) and directed staff, as part of the 2023 Budget process, to bring forward an option that continues the 1% incremental Rapid Transit Infrastructure Levy in 2023 and 2024. This contribution will help fund the tax levy contribution needed for the Yonge North Subway Extension.

Fiscal sustainability requires making financial decisions for the long term, while being

- Keeping growth affordable and the Region's existing infrastructure in a state of good repair
- Maintaining its AAA credit rating
- Having the fiscal flexibility to respond to the Region's evolving needs and economic changes
- Treating current and future tax and ratepayers fairly

Maintaining fiscal sustainability is a sign of prudent fiscal management and contributes to the Region's strong and stable credit ratings.

Vacant Homes Tax

Regional Council has authorized a feasibility study of a [Vacant Homes Tax](#) that would apply only to non-principal residences that are unoccupied for a specified period. This tax would encourage homeowners to occupy or rent out their homes and any tax revenues generated would be used to support affordable housing initiatives.

Preliminary analysis suggests York Region could have upwards of 4,000 vacant homes. To understand and gauge support for this tax, York Region is looking for the communities' input and feedback. Viewpoints, including opinions on the ways and means of determining vacancy, can be shared by completing a [short survey](#). Two virtual town hall meetings to discuss the potential tax will be held on Thursday, July 7, 2022, and Monday, July 11, 2022, beginning at 5 p.m.

Visit york.ca/VacantHomesTax to register.

York Region waste levels stabilize following pandemic increase; top diversion rates achieved

York Region and its local municipal partners [achieved 92% diversion from landfill in 2021](#), once again exceeding the [Regional Official Plan](#) goal of 90%. This includes all waste collected through local municipal curbside programs, depot diversion programs and energy-from-waste efforts.

In 2021, York Region reported 65% diversion in accordance with the Resource

have ranked first in the RPRA large urban category.

Highlights from the [2021 Annual Waste Management Report](#) include:

- Waste generation rates stabilized following sharp increases in 2020 due to the pandemic; items residents would normally bring to (and dispose of) at school, work or in the community were largely being used at home and put into residential waste collection programs
- Curbside green bin volume increased slightly, with a small decrease in the garbage volume
- 55,000 tonnes of recyclables collected through the Blue Box program were sold to end markets to be made into new products such as newsprint, cardboard, beverage containers, plastic lumber and carpet
- Depot usage continued to grow, with over 309,000 visitors using depots to safely recycle or dispose of unwanted items, including 1,365 tonnes of household hazardous waste and 1,085 tonnes of electronic waste

Despite increased costs and waste generated during the pandemic, York Region continued to deliver its waste management programs and services at about \$300 per household per year or less than \$1 per day. Residents can learn more about the [SM4RT Living Plan](#), York Region's innovative integrated waste management master plan to prioritize waste reduction and reuse and find waste programs and services at york.ca/waste

York Region Court Services 2021 Annual Report

Regional Council received the [York Region Court Services Annual Report 2021](#), which highlights key activities and achievements from last year.

2021 accomplishments include:

- Transitioned in-person court hearings to a virtual platform and developed processes to meet court etiquette protocols and ensured all stakeholders could participate in remote hearings
- Established an appointment-based customer service model for front counter services and certain in-court services

In addition to these accomplishments, 2021 court operations were again impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Region's response. Trial matters, the number of charges filed and services sought through either telephone or front counter appointments were all lower than pre-COVID-19 levels. These decreases were a result of a number of factors, including provincially mandated public health and safety measures, as well as the reduction in provincial judicial resources in 2020.

Court Services is poised to continue its upswing to reach pre-pandemic service levels through increased access to in-person proceedings, the use of video options for some hearings and the modernization of services to advance improved access for court users, stakeholders and York Region residents.

For more information on Court Services, please visit york.ca/courts

York Region keeps corporate greenhouse gas emissions down in 2021

York Region's corporate greenhouse gas emissions fell by 710 tonnes in 2021 to 65,980 tonnes, 18% below pre-pandemic emissions targets as highlighted in the [2021 Corporate Energy Report](#).

Initiatives like fleet electrification (including buses), building system upgrades and hybrid police patrol vehicles are producing immediate and measurable emission and cost reductions while long-term climate change action plans under development will guide future efforts to achieve net-zero carbon emissions.

Operational changes, specifically to transit service ridership, in response to the pandemic account for most of York Region's corporate emission reductions. It is anticipated corporate emissions will rebound with an increase in transit service while successes from long-term efforts will continue beyond the global pandemic.

Office consolidations, conducting business virtually, digital processes and reduced employee vehicle use saved the Region \$1.8 million and contributed to the Region's 2021 emissions reductions.

Corporate energy costs increased by 5% to \$45.6 million in 2021 driven by rising

annual operating costs by 2030, driving opportunities to further reduce fossil fuel use.

The annual Corporate Energy Report is York Region's primary tool for reporting progress toward achievement of Regional Council approved emission targets. Reduced corporate emissions resulting from mitigation efforts support the Region's work to address priorities in the draft [Climate Change Action Plan](#).

Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy on track with over 90% of actions underway

Regional Council received an update on the [2021 Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy](#) achievements. York Region's agri-food sector of farms, food processors, grocery stores and restaurants provide approximately 57,000 jobs and contribute \$2.7 billion to York Region's economic vitality.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges such as labour shortages and supply chain disruptions negatively impacted the agri-food sector. However, despite these challenges the implementation of the York Region's Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy plan remains successfully on track with over 90% of [strategic actions](#) underway or completed.

Highlights of the 2021 achievements include:

- Hosting the [2021 Agri-Food Forum](#) in partnership with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and raising the profile and importance of the local agri-food sector
- Delivering the [York Region Food and Beverage Accelerator Program](#) and achieving more than \$900,000 in total revenue over the past two years
- Engaging with over 6,000 participants and growing social media presence
- Continuing digital engagement with stakeholders and the public to deliver virtual events and activities, specifically through the COVID-19 pandemic

Through implementation of the [Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy](#), York Region continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to the agriculture and agri-food sector's long-term growth. With a focus on building partnerships and leveraging

Learn more about York Region's vibrant agricultural sector at york.ca/agrifood

2018 to 2022 Council Accomplishments

Regional Council received the [2021 Community Report](#) and a memo highlighting [Council's 2018 to 2022 accomplishments](#). While COVID-19 was the predominant issue for this term of Council, a number of critical initiatives continued to advance, including:

- [The Yonge North Subway Extension](#)
- [The Municipal Comprehensive Review](#) and updated [Regional Official Plan](#)
- [2022 Development Charges Bylaw](#) update
- Construction of the [York University Markham Centre Campus](#)
- Expansion of the [YorkNet](#) fibre optic network

These accomplishments, along with financial statements and updates on many other vital programs and services that align with York Region's [strategic goals](#), are highlighted throughout the 2021 Community Report. The report also delivers a comprehensive look into the Region's response to COVID-19 and features important information about York Region's [multi-year budget](#) and the [Regional Fiscal Strategy](#).

Supporting residents to find and keep affordable housing

Regional Council received the [Housing Solutions – A place for everyone progress report](#), which highlights how York Region, in collaboration with a broad range of community partners and senior government partners, is acting to support individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and individuals who needed to safely shelter in place.

Over the past three years, the Region has made significant progress toward the goals and objectives of [Housing Solutions Phase 2](#), including:

- Housing 329 applicants from the subsidized housing wait list
- Initiating a Housing Affordability Task Force to advise on strategies to further address private market affordability challenges

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97 units in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

- Initiating construction of 26 new transitional housing units in the Town of Georgina and the Town of East Gwillimbury

Housing affordability remains a key issue for Regional Council and demand for subsidized housing continues to grow. Looking ahead, the 2022 work plan and 2023 outlook include actions to continue addressing the affordability challenges of residents.

Sustained federal and provincial investment is essential in working towards the goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing, supporting people to find and keep housing and strengthening the housing and homelessness system. York Region, together with our partners, remains focused on helping residents find and keep appropriate housing, aligning with our vision to create strong, caring and safe communities.

For more information, visit york.ca/housing

Safety enhancements for travellers on York Region roads

To enhance traveller safety, Regional Council approved the continued use of [Automated Speed Enforcement](#) and is expanding the program by adding:

- Two more mobile cameras by 2024
- 60 fixed automated speed enforcement cameras by 2026
- 15 more red light cameras at select intersections by 2026

In November 2020, York Region began a two-year, limited use automated speed enforcement pilot on select Regional roads. The pilot has one mobile automated speed enforcement camera rotating among 12 Community safety zones, covering 19 schools. Early pilot results show speed compliance has increased by more than 35% in school areas when automated speed enforcement cameras are in use.

York Region also currently operates [red light cameras](#) at 40 signalized intersections. These cameras have reduced right-angle and turning movement collisions Region-wide by approximately 50%. Expansion of the program would add five more cameras

The estimated cost in 2023 to operate three automated speed enforcement mobile cameras and 40 red light cameras is approximately \$2 million per year. The cost will increase by approximately \$5 million each year with a total of 60 additional fixed cameras and 15 additional red light cameras between 2024 and 2026.

Accelerating electrification of York Region Transit Fleet

Regional Council approved the [Zero Emissions Transit Fund Application](#), a program developed by the federal government to provide financial support to municipal transit agencies pursuing fleet electrification.

If York Region's application is federally approved, York Region Transit could accelerate vehicle electrification by 10 years and achieve its goal of transitioning the entire fleet by 2041.

The financial application includes a total funding request of \$213 million, with approximately \$76 million in the form of a grant and \$137 million in the form of a low-interest loan. The total project cost to electrify the YRT transit fleet, including the infrastructure upgrades and electric bus purchases, is approximately \$350 million and will include \$137 million in Regional funding.

York Region Transit currently operates 12 electric buses, with benefits such as reduced fuel and maintenance costs, reduced noise and reduced emissions.

[Transit Fleet Electrification Plan](#) includes a phased approach to eliminate greenhouse gases emitted by transit vehicles, balancing technology adoption with service reliability and incorporating timelines required to deliver necessary infrastructure. The plan includes purchasing diesel buses along with incremental quantities of electric buses up to 2029 and then transitioning to exclusively purchasing electric buses in 2030 and beyond.

Electrification of YRT buses is one of many activities and actions underway to align with York Region's Vision 2051, which sets an aspirational goal of net-zero corporate greenhouse gas emissions.

Regional Council joined partners from York University, Seneca College, ventureLab and the Region's nine cities and towns at the 2022 Collision Conference to showcase York Region as a tech innovation leader and announce \$250 million in new investments in the Region's tech and innovation sector.

In addition to the investment announcements that will result in more than 800 new tech jobs over the next several years, the York Region pavilion at Collision Conference showcased the Region's economic vitality and further positioned our communities as a place where talent, innovation and opportunity intersect.

York Region launches application for Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System

Regional Council received an [update](#) on the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System, including implementation of the care fee reduction and rebate program.

Participation in the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System is optional, and The Ministry of Education requires child care operators to opt in by September 1, 2022. The Region's online application for licenced child care operators to opt in launched on June 22, 2022, at york.ca/childcareoperators

York Region will receive approximately \$103 million in new funding to implement the program, with more than 96% of that funding allocated to the reduction of child care fees. Operators who choose to opt into the program will begin receiving funding this fall to cover the cost of fee rebates and reductions to families with children under the age of six. Initial child care rebates will provide families with a 25% fee reduction on child care costs retroactive to April 1, 2022. This will be followed by a second 25% fee reduction at the end of 2022.

To ensure child care operators are aware of the application deadline and fully understand the implications of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care System, York Region hosted two virtual information sessions on June 15 and June

York Region receives Government Finance Officers Association budget award

York Region has received the [Government Finance Officers Association \(GFOA\) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award](#) for its 2022 budget document. This marks the 18th consecutive year York Region has received this award.

The GFOA is a professional association serving more than 22,500 government finance professionals throughout North America. The Distinguished Budget Presentation Award is the highest recognition in governmental budgeting. To receive this award, a government agency must publish a budget document that meets program criteria as a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide and a communication function.

In April 2022, York Region was awarded a special Triple Crown Medallion from the GFOA in recognition of receiving all three GFOA awards for the 2020 fiscal year. The three awards are the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award, Distinguished Budget Presentation Award and Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award. The Government Finance Officers Association refers to this achievement as a testament to the Region's commitment to producing financial reports that provide the spirit of full disclosure and transparency.

York Region and York Region Rapid Transit recognized for collaboration and excellence

Regional Council celebrated a number of industry awards recognizing York Region and York Region Rapid Transit Corporation for collaborative and innovative work related to communication efforts and infrastructure implementation and management.

Awards celebrated by Regional Council in June 2022 include:

- MTO Road Safety Achievement Award for the [Intersection Safety Pilot](#)
- Two [Ontario Public Works Project of the Year Awards](#) for the [York Durham Sewage System Forcemain Twinning Project](#) and the [Yonge Street Rapid Transit project](#)

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- Three [2022 Hermes Creative Awards](#) for communication efforts around road closures, pedestrian safety and the automated speed enforcement pilot
- Four [2022 IABC Ovation Awards](#), including Corporate Communications Department of the Year and three [2022 IABC Gold Quill Awards](#), including Communications Department of the year

In addition to these outstanding achievements, Regional Council also extended congratulations to Director of Capital Planning and Delivery for Public Works Mike Rabeau, the 2022 recipient of the [Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association](#) Infrastructure Award of Excellence.

Canada Day 2022

Regional Council acknowledged [Canada Day 2022](#) as an opportunity to celebrate Canada and the many diverse people we share our country with, while also committing to do more to build a welcoming nation, diverse and inclusive and where everyone feels like they belong.

Recognizing for many Indigenous Partners, July 1st is a day of mourning rather than celebration, Regional Council encouraged residents to use the day as a time for thoughtful reflection and examination of what it means to be Canadian by learning more about our shared past and accepting the realities of our history with honesty and humbleness.

Public Service Day

Regional Council recognized Thursday, June 23, 2022, as [United Nations Public Service Day](#), extending appreciation to the outstanding staff who help make York Region a strong, caring, safe community.

Public Service Day celebrates the dedication and hard work of public servants across the world and recognizes their creative achievements and contributions to the communities they service. The day also highlights the value and virtues of public services and encourages young people to seek careers in the industry.

World Sickle Cell Day

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Region.

First established in 2005, World Sickle Cell Days encourages global awareness and action to support those living with Sickle Cell disease, improve treatment, educate the community and reduce the number of children born with the disease.

World Sickle Cell Day is supported and organized by the [Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario](#).

Provincial Election

Regional Council extended congratulations to Premier Ford and York Region's [10 elected and re-elected Members of Provincial Parliament](#), following the June 2, 2022, provincial election.

Regional Council works closely with representatives from all levels of government to help advance the priorities most important to the more than 1.2 million residents who call York Region home. Following the 43rd Ontario General Election, Regional Council remains committed to collaborating with provincial partners to address a number of critical issues, including post-pandemic recovery, affordable housing and safe and reliable transportation options.

Next meeting of York Regional Council

York Regional Council will meet on Thursday, September 29, 2022, at 9 a.m. To continue protecting the health and well-being of residents, this is currently planned to be a hybrid meeting, with Members of Council attending either in-person or virtually. 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 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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