



York Region

Infrastructure Master Plan Update
Public Consultation Centre 2, Meeting 1

Meeting Notes

**Town of East Gwillimbury
Civic Centre, Council Chambers
19000 Leslie Street, Sharon
6:30 pm-9:00 pm**

November 6, 2007

The electronic version of these meeting notes could be found at:
<http://york.waterwastewatermasterplan.ca>

I. Opening

Dave Hardy (Facilitator, Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited) opened the session. He welcomed the 28 attendees and introduced the project team members.

II. Presentation

Paul May, Director of Infrastructure Planning for the Region of York, gave a presentation on behalf of the Region of York on the infrastructure Master Plans and York Region's sustainability principles. A copy of this presentation is available online at:
<http://www.york.waterwastewatermasterplan.ca/files/Presentation-Nov-6-2007.pdf>.

III. Dialogue Session

A resident raised the concern that the Region appears to be struggling with defining sustainability. The resident requested staff members clarify the concept of 'sustainability'.

Another question was raised about the definition of sustainability and how the concept is related to the Transportation and the Water and Wastewater Master Plans.

Paul May indicated that sustainability is used as a criterion in evaluating different scenarios for both of the plans. He encouraged the public to contribute comments and ideas on defining the concept of sustainability.

Dave Hardy asked whether a preamble in the Master Plans, which speaks to broader, more encompassing definition of sustainability, would be useful.

The participant indicated that this would be useful.

A resident questioned the strong focus on the concept of sustainability in both of the plans. Residents were concerned that sustainability is overly human-centered (anthropocentric) rather than nature-centered. The resident felt the concept should be examined in more detail and re-defined.

Dave asked if a solid think piece about nature-based definitions of sustainability and anthropocentric based definitions of sustainability would be helpful.

The resident said that an awareness program, in which the Region takes leadership, would be helpful.

A resident asked whether a rain barrel program can be mandated in York Region.

Paul May indicated that the Region would not need regulatory authority from the province to institute a rain barrel program. Through the Water for Tomorrow initiative, the Region has been going to different households and installing new showerheads, rain barrels, etc.

An East Gwillimbury staff member asked Paul May about the jurisdiction of the Province and the Region, and how their authority conflicts with the East Gwillimbury planning decisions.

Paul May explained the jurisdiction of both levels of government, and added that individual properties and local matters fall under the jurisdiction of the Town. Regarding water and wastewater infrastructure, Paul May indicated that the Region is responsible for the main pipes, but the city is responsible for supplying connections to homes. The Region's Official Plan looks at the entire Region, but then each municipality's local municipal plan has jurisdiction over local planning.

The staff member continued to question Paul May about the new undertakings and improvements considered for the Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

Paul May listed some of the major undertakings, such as extending GO Transit to all day rail service. He added that the TMP would include improving the current infrastructure in the Region. The East Gwillimbury staff member suggested implementing the use of tolls and light rail transit.

The resident then asked about the 'big pipe' that is going to connect to Queensville. She said that Queensville Properties is paying for it, and she asked whether residents have to pay to connect to it.

Shivan Narine indicated that this is a special scenario in which the developers have taken the full financial risk for the project. There is no law which indicates that residents have to disconnect their septic systems; this is optional. Therefore, when a resident's septic system comes of age, the resident can take the option of connecting to the municipal system.

The situation in Queensville, Shivan said, is different than the situation in King City. In King City, there is a health risk.

A resident noted that 'transportation is the key to success of a city'. He suggested that the Province should amalgamate all transportation services into one system. This would allow the Province to function as one geographical area.

Paul May agreed, but said such an initiative is not been addressed in the TMP. A common fare card might be a possible solution, and this would be implemented in the next stage of the TMP. As well, examples from Hong Kong and London show that different providers can still function efficiently together. Residents then suggested decreasing transit travel time in order to successfully implement the TMP and to encourage less auto usage.

A resident indicated that York Region should be congratulated on the work that has been completed thus far. However, he said that he is not convinced that implementation will get the same marks as planning received. He said that a major part of the planning work should be the development of a growth management piece in which developments are staged in a logical sequence, so that there is no repeat of the situation in Queensville. He indicated that he requested a bump-up of the Queensville project to a full individual EA for that reason. He said that he sees nothing about staging in the Master Plan, and asked if any information about staging would be included.

Paul May indicated that staging will done in the next round of analysis. In terms of servicing different communities, the Region will look at different options with different scenarios.

The resident then asked if it would be logical to roll the plans for Queensville into the Water and Wastewater Master Plan.

Paul May responded that not everything can be put into the infrastructure master plan, because it would then become unwieldy. The infrastructure Master Plan provides overall direction to York Region, but then there has to be another level of detail for specific projects.

A resident indicated that when the Yonge Street Aquifer was being built, a lot of rivers ran dry, and residents complained. Since then, a small portion of the Maskinonge River has been running dry. This is significant because it is a pike fishery for Lake Simcoe.

He asked, if the local river is running dry, did the Region cut back on the amount of water being pumped from the Yonge Street Aquifer this year?

Paul May indicated that all new growth in York Region will be accommodated with surface water. Stephen Fung indicated that the Region did not reduce groundwater uptake this year, but in the future the Region will limit the amount of groundwater uptake.

A resident asked that if the aquifer is having a negative impact on streams, would it be better to use Lake Ontario water and run the water up from Lake Ontario?

Stephen Fung indicated that this question is being examined as part of the current study. Part of the plan is to pump more water from Newmarket-Aurora so that in the future these areas do not rely on the aquifer.

A resident asked why the Region took the sign away from the Yonge Street aquifer. He noted that there is no sign presently at the aquifer site. He asked, is this to hide the aquifer?

Dave Hardy said that this issue could be investigated and that a response provided later.

A resident commented that she hopes stakeholders from Lake Simcoe receive money from the government if they don't have water. She opined that Lake Simcoe will run dry when the streams run dry.

A resident commented that York Region should be commended for their current actions. She said that she enjoys riding VIVA, and that her household has had its flappers changed. Regarding water and wastewater, she asked if there was a deficit of Aurora sewage going over the hill to Pickering.

Paul May indicated that currently there is some transfer, and there has been since the YDSS was created. However, he indicated, the Region has committed to no net increases in transfers.

Tracey McLean indicated that the Region has examined a scenario in which there is no use of aquifers. However, she said, it would be prohibitively expensive.

Dave Hardy asked the resident what she thought should be done.

The resident indicated that some means should be developed to provide recharge to the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Another resident expressed support for the concept of mixed-use development, where live, work and play can all exist in one place. This would require fewer crossings of municipal boundaries and would promote more local travel. Educating the public and changing their perception of travel is needed. An education plan should be incorporated into the TMP.

Dave Hardy asked the resident if he felt that the Region's plans were robust enough regarding intensification.

The resident said that there are a lot of people who do not want to change. You need to engage in education in order to change attitudes.

A resident said that he senses reluctance in various communities to follow Places to Grow genuinely. He said that many members of the public probably don't know about it very well but would want to do something about it if they knew what it was.

He suggested that the Region should write to Queen's Park and say that there are some challenges regarding implementation and compliance. He suggested that the Province should participate more in the solution.

Paul May responded that we should look at York Region's role in the whole country, in light of immigration and other factors.

John Waller said that the present position of York Regional Council is that the Region cannot accept the current growth trends without significant investment from the province.

A resident indicated that the Region is not understanding this issue correctly. The province undertook the development of Places to Grow in response to urban sprawl. He supports council in saying that they are not going to do it, because staging of developments should be done. Additionally, the resident indicated support for the use of development charges to support growth in the Region.

A resident asked a question about the Great Lakes. He said that the levels of Lake Huron, Lake Superior, and Lake Michigan have dropped. He asked whether Lake Ontario has dropped as much as these other lakes.

Paul May said that Lake Ontario has not dropped on the same scale. Lake Michigan dropped significantly due to dredging and other activities.

A resident asked what would happen to the ideas generated at the meeting. He asked if anyone would be paying attention.

Dave Hardy responded that the Region is paying attention. All comments will be included as part of the process and will be considered in the Master Plans.

A resident said that given the number of people attending the PCC, it would be interesting to compare the size and demeanour of this group to a group that came out when an incinerator was built. Somehow, he said, the message needs to get out that the issues being discussed affect their future. 1.5% population growth per year in York Region will have exponential effects that people should be aware of.

Debbie Gordon, a resident representing Save the Maskinonge, said that the Maskinonge River is so dry that people have to go to their barns to get water for their homes. She asked, is the Region able to adjust how much water is being taken from the Maskinonge?

Stephen Fung indicated that there will be no increase in groundwater uptake.

Debbie Gordon then indicated that there is no habitat in the river. Also, the river is the only drinking source for many mammals in the community, and it is drying up.

Paul May indicated that the problem with the Maskinonge is complex. A dry summer in the past year contributed to the problems. One thing that hasn't changed, however, is the quantity of groundwater that York Region has taken. The summer was dry compared to other years, but other factors such as water for private wells and direct takings have contributed to the current problem. York Region is just one part of the issue, but the Region is willing play its role in the overall management of the river.

Dave Hardy thanked the residents for participating in the PCC and closed the dialogue session. The residents were notified that minutes will be retrievable on the Region's website and the Consultants will take into consideration all the comments noted today.

END OF SESSION