



Thursday February 2, 2006

Media Release

Dewatering reduced by 60 per cent on 16th Avenue Phase II project

Media tours of the project site available by contacting York Region Corporate Communications

NEWMARKET – Dewatering on the YDSS 16th Avenue, Phase II project continues to dramatically decrease. Sections of the project are ahead of schedule and have allowed five of the six dewatering wells at the Stone Mason access shaft to be closed, lowering the dewatering rate to 8,000 litres per minute. This signifies a 60 per cent reduction in water taking for the entire project.

The Permit to Take Water issued by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) allowed for a project dewatering rate of a maximum 38,000 litres per minute. However, through comprehensive project management, York Region had maintained an average dewatering rate of 20,000 litres per minute.

Total dewatering on this project represents less than four per cent of all water available within the aquifer. The aquifer holds more than 1,300 billion litres of water, which is continually recharged through natural precipitation. All removed groundwater is returned to the environment in a responsible manner.

To further minimize the environmental impact of the Stone Mason access shaft, a new shaft for the 16th Avenue trunk sewer project is being built at the intersection of McCowan Road and 16th Avenue. With the commissioning of this shaft next month, dewatering will be further reduced an additional 10 per cent to approximately 6,000 litres per minute, representing a 70 per cent reduction in actual water taking for the entire project or 84 per cent less dewatering than the MOE's limit.

Construction is progressing very well, with all project construction east of McCowan Road now complete. One tunnel boring machine is continuing west from Kennedy Road, while a second tunnel boring machine is undergoing maintenance at the McCowan Road shaft and will be progressing west once the McCowan Road shaft is complete.

"The progress we are making on this project is encouraging," said Regional Chair and CEO Bill Fisch. "The pumps at Stone Mason Drive started shutting down toward the end of November, and since that time, the ground water level at that location has increased more than four metres. The aquifer levels continue to recover steadily."

This section of the YDSS project began in 1999 in the south-east section of York Region, with the 5.4 kilometre Ninth Line sewer from approximately 100 metres south of Highway 407 in the community of Box Grove to 16th Avenue in the Town of Markham. The second phase continued west along 16th Avenue from Ninth Line to Stone Mason Drive.

Final construction of this project (16th Avenue, Phase II) includes the use of two state-of-the-art tunnelling machines and began in April 2005. This phase will link the completed 16th Avenue Phase I sewer at Stone Mason Drive with the existing Highway 404 Trunk Sewer, located just east of Woodbine Avenue. To date, 77 per cent of the total sewer between the community of Box Grove and Woodbine Avenue is now complete.

"The section of sewer from Kennedy Road to just east of Woodbine Avenue is being built without dewatering," said Town of Markham Regional Councillor Bill O'Donnell, Chair of the Region's Transportation and Works Committee. "York Region is committed to protecting the environment, and our work on this important infrastructure project continues to demonstrate this pledge."

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Total project cost is \$80 million and includes an extensive \$30 million Environmental Monitoring and Well Mitigation Plan, created under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, to avoid or mitigate temporary environmental impacts resulting from the project.

The private well mitigation plan includes modification of existing wells, provision of new wells or connection to municipal water supplies, as appropriate. The environmental monitoring program includes ongoing screening of fish habitat and aquifer levels.

The YDSS is a state-of-the-art wastewater collection system first constructed by the Province of Ontario in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The idea for the YDSS – a centralized sewage treatment system – dates back to 1965 when the province decided that no additional sewage treatment plants could be built on the Humber, Don and Rouge Rivers. The YDSS converges at the jointly operated (York Region and Durham Region) Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) located in Pickering, and discharges treated wastewater into Lake Ontario.

The YDSS continues to serve as one of the best and most environmentally friendly systems in the entire Great Lakes region. Twinning the YDSS is critical to ensure adequate wastewater treatment for current and future York Region residents and businesses as the Region's population is expected to grow to more than 1.5 million people by 2031.

For more information on the YDSS, please visit www.york.ca and follow the links on the main page titled, "York Durham Sewage System information."

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