



*Office of the Commissioner
of Health Services*

July 23, 2004

Regional Councillor Frank Scarpitti
Chair, Planning and Economic Development Committee
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 7V1

Dear Councillor Scarpitti,

**Re: Request for Comment from the Medical Officer of Health on the Health
Issues Related to Electromagnetic Fields (EMFs)**

I am writing in response to your request for comments on the health issues related to electromagnetic fields (EMFs).

There are many different sources of EMF exposure in daily life including microwaves, radios, computers and cell phones. Electricity transmission lines are determined to be an extremely low frequency EMF source. The regulation of EMFs is the jurisdictional responsibility of the federal government. At this time, the federal government has not established any human exposure limits with respect to extremely low frequency EMFs associated with electricity transmission lines.

To date, experts have not been able to prove conclusively that extremely low frequency EMFs cause cancer, nor have experts been able to establish the level or magnitude of extremely low frequency EMF exposure that is considered a hazard. In fact, it is still unclear whether it is the strength of the field, the duration of the exposure, or both that could potentially cause cancer, or another agent entirely that may or may not be associated with extremely low frequency EMFs.

Risk assessments regarding the health implications of EMFs have been undertaken by Health Canada, the World Health Organization and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection. Currently, Health Canada does not consider guidelines for extremely low frequency EMFs necessary since the scientific evidence is not strong enough to conclude that typical exposures cause health problems. However, Health Canada continues to research potential health effects associated with extremely low frequency EMF exposure.

The York Region Health Services Department will continue to liaise with Health Canada on this issue and will notify area municipalities if pertinent new information becomes

available. Meanwhile, in the absence of any consistent or conclusive evidence of a causal relationship between extremely low frequency EMF exposure and human health, and in the interest of public health, I would recommend that all residents practise prudent avoidance and limit exposure to all sources of EMFs where economically and reasonably feasible.

Sincerely,



Dr. K. Helena Jaczek MD,CCFP,MHSc,MBA,CHE
Commissioner of Health Services
and Medical Officer of Health

Copy to: B. Panizza, Director of Corporate Services/Municipal Clerk, Town of Aurora
L. King, Director of Corporate Services and Town Clerk, Town of East Gwillimbury
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