Transportation & Works – Transit

Transit Accessibility

What we have done differently:

In accordance with Ontarians With Disabilities Act legislation, all transit service authorities in Ontario are to provide accessibility to all residents of the province. Continued transit funding is partially contingent on visible efforts to attain 100% accessibility. York Region has made this initiative a priority and has funded the YRT capital program accordingly.

The criteria for accessibility is being addressed by providing vehicles which enable boarding by those with physical impairments up to and including wheelchair use.

Since amalgamation of the municipal transit systems in 2001, there has been a continual initiative to provide fully accessible vehicles for York Region residents. The goal is to have the entire fleet 100% accessible with a target year range of 2010-2012. Currently the fleet is 80% accessible. As older vehicles are retired from service they are replaced with buses which meet the established accessibility criteria. Any new expansion units must also meet the criteria. In 2004 YRT added 15 new vehicles – 12 conventional and 3 specialized which contribute towards this goal.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

A typical Mobility Plus (specialized) transit trip costs the Region almost $20, net of fare revenue. By providing a fully accessible conventional alternative, the cost is reduced to approximately $2.50 per trip.

YRT is actively promoting the use of conventional transit as a viable alternative to the more costly specialized service. Appropriate residents are being encouraged to change their use of transit from Mobility Plus to the conventional service. Several special travel training initiatives are being utilized to effect the desired change.

Barriers to further improvements:

The only barrier is financial (budget). YRT includes capital funding each year to purchase new or replacement units. The 100% accessible goal is on schedule to be achieved over the next 5-7 years.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Transit Cost to Taxpayers

What we have done differently:

Since amalgamation in 2001 York Region residents have supported Transit service through their property taxes. The proportion has varied according to the amount of revenues collected from users of the service. In 2004 the revenue/cost ratio exceeded 50% for the first time. This means that for every dollar spent on Transit more than 50 cents was recovered through fares paid.

This ratio is an operating cost only using CUTA methodology. It does not include the cost of capital.

This achievement goes hand-in-hand with the level of ridership reaching a weekday average of 55,000. This has been accomplished through marketing initiatives to promote the benefits of transit and encourage use. It also reflects the improvements in service for residents.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

A noticeable improvement in recovery of costs has been made each year since amalgamation. The budget for 2004 was just over $52 million. In order to achieve a 50% recovery of these costs, over $26 million had to be collected from fares. This was accomplished and a 50.2% cost recovery ratio resulted.

YRT is actively promoting the use of conventional transit as a viable alternative to the use of personal motor vehicles. The two main goals of this are 1) reduced traffic gridlock and 2) reduced costs in building new roads.

Barriers to further improvements:

The barriers for further improvements are many. They include public response to the availability of Transit, the pace of growth in the region and the continued funding from both federal and provincial levels of government. The revenue/cost ratio will likely fall to less than 50% with the significant investment in Rapid Transit in 2005.

Municipal Act – Section 300

New Transit Terminal at Vaughan Mills

What we have done differently:

The first major mall to be built in the GTA in over a decade was constructed and opened in November 2004 in Vaughan near Highway 400 and Rutherford Road. This was a major initiative for the community and was intended to attract a large number of customers. As such it was identified as a priority for YRT to include for construction of a bus terminal on the property. This was necessary to enable customers and mall staff to travel to and from the mall without use of a personal vehicle.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

Multiple bus routes intersect at this terminal. Hours of operation can be modified to accommodate mall business hours which may vary (such as during the Christmas Holiday season). There is also access for Mobility Plus service vehicles.

YRT is actively promoting the use of conventional transit as a viable alternative to the use of personal motor vehicles. This type of facility contributes to the viability of Transit as an option for residents of the region.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Transportation & Works – Roads

Light Emitting Diode (LED) Traffic Control Signal Display Retrofit Program

What we have done differently:

For many years, the predominant traffic control signal display consisted of incandescent light bulbs. These bulbs were effective at the time; however, with rising hydro and maintenance costs, and the introduction of LED technology, the Region established the first program in Ontario to retrofit approximately 20,000 incandescent displays with LED technology.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

A typical signalized intersection using incandescent lamps consumes 1,090 kWh of electricity per year. Incandescent lamps require annual re-lamping, cleaning and emergency maintenance. Emergency maintenance may consist of a service call by the maintenance contractor to replace the light bulb. If this occurs at any time other than 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on a workday, the cost of the service call is approximately $600.

Significant energy savings combined with lower maintenance costs were obtained through the use of LED traffic signals as compared to incandescent lights. The Region maintains over 654 Traffic Signalized Intersections and the annual savings per year is $350,000 for hydro and $329,000 for reduced maintenance cost or $1,085 per signalized intersection completely attributed to LED.

The LED display consists of a number of small light emitting diodes connected in strings so that if one LED fails, only the string that the LED is on goes out. This leaves several other strings of LED to maintain the signal display in operation. The LED display is much brighter than the incandescent display, therefore, providing a more visible signal and a safer intersection. It is expected with the aging population, these LED displays will provide a display that is easier to see both in the daylight hours and at night-time.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Anti-Icing Program

What we have done differently:

The Anti-icing initiative is a methodology that reduces the use of salt on the Regional road system. This method includes the application of a chemical solution (salt brine) to the pavement before a storm to prevent the bonding of ice and snow to the road surface. The brine solution is applied via Regional trucks equipped with 10,000 litre brine tanks and spray equipment that utilize the vehicles hydraulic system. This system does not replace the traditional granular salt application but compliments it given specific Winter weather conditions.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The anti-icing effort is designed to help reduce the amount of salt that is used on the Regional road system. The application of anti-icing brine delays the application of granular salt and in some cases eliminates the need for granular salt during a particular storm. Annual savings attributed to reduced salt applications are estimated from $100,000 to $150,000 or $31 to $46 per lane kilometre.

Anti-icing is also used in areas where black ice may form. Information is received from the Road Weather Information System (RWIS) when black ice is possible and anti-icing solution is then applied prior to the formation of black ice. Tests have proven that ice has a reduced probability of formation once Salt brine has been applied to the road surface and increased public safety.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Transportation & Works – Solid Waste Management

Household Source Separated Organics (SSO) Pilot Project

What we have done differently:

In 2004 the Region participated in a pilot project based in Markham to divert household organic material from landfill. If successful, the program will be rolled out to the entire region by 2008.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The SSO project reduced landfill and increased organic materials by 848.56 tonnes. This resulted in a 36% reduction of landfill needs with an average of 2 fewer trucks a week going to a Michigan landfill site during the test period.

As well, SSO provides a new source of organic compost, which is beneficial for the environment.

Barriers to further improvements:

This program is approximately twice the cost of landfill waste. It requires additional resources to promote and educate consumers on the benefits of SSO.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Health

GIVE – Get Involved, Volunteer in Education

What we have done differently:

GIVE is a volunteer training program for elementary schools that the School Services team of the Health Services Department implemented in 2004 in partnership with York Region District School Board and York Region Community Services and Housing. Existing and new volunteers are recruited into the program, particularly new immigrants and recipients of the Ontario Works program. The program curriculum includes health promotion messaging, parenting, conflict resolution, job skills training, child development and behavioural strategies. The GIVE program allows Health Services to promote Comprehensive School Health and provide parenting and healthy lifestyle information to populations that often are not reached by Health Services programs.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

Economies in program delivery were achieved by sharing costs of the program between the partners. While each partner could have offered this training separately, incorporating training realized savings of approximately 30 percent overall. Seventy-seven percent of attendees reported an increase in parenting skills, which is expected to increase the success of both families and children. In addition, newcomers to Canada reported a decrease in social isolation.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Train-the-Trainer – Infection Control in Long-Term Care Homes (LTCHs)

What we have done differently:

Historically, staff from the Infectious Diseases Control Division has responded to requests from individual LTCHs to provide education regarding infection control practices to reduce/eliminate transmission of infectious diseases among the vulnerable population cared for in LTCHs. It was recognized that this knowledge was not sustainable as 1) there was no internal resource within the facility and 2) few staff would be able to attend the session because of heavy workloads.

A train-the-trainer model was adopted. A designated staff person from interested facilities was provided with the information, tools and strategies to function as an educator and resource to staff within their own environment.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

This has enabled a growing number of facilities to build internal expertise in infection control that can act as an ongoing resource and can provide in-services more frequently and targeted to staff over time. In addition, this model enabled a greater number of facilities to be autonomous in educating their own personnel. Fewer staff was required from the Health Services Department to ultimately reach a large number of staff in LTCHs.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Community Services & Housing

Family Strengthening Program

What we have done differently:

The Community Services and Housing Department manages a number of provincial and federal program initiatives offering unique services to support the family including Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP), Children and Youth programs, Homelessness Initiatives, Informal Child Care Provider Training, Recreation and Summer Camp for children of participants and tenants.

In 2004, the Department began to co-ordinate these programs and initiatives with our core services and, through an assessment-referral-case management model, focused on strengthening the well being and economic success of families.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The co-ordinated service approach promotes:

- increased employment supports and opportunities for the parents
- stable, healthy families by improving their ability to achieve independence
- improved social emotional and educational outcomes for the children reduced administrative costs

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Contact Centre

What we have done differently:

The Community Services and Housing Department (CSH) fully implemented a central Department Contact Centre to integrate its 'first call' operations. The CSH Contact Centre began receiving all Department "first calls" in November 2003, providing a single point telephone access approach.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The implementation of the Contact Centre has eliminated the need for clients to call several different service areas to access programs within the department. The Contact Centre manages information, referral, screening and application functions that provide callers with program information and allow staff to link the caller to all of the services needed. This first-call centre has reduced operating costs through the effective use of telephone technology and a central contact point.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Funding Strategy

What we have done differently:

The Department implemented a funding strategy approved by Council to manage a number of Municipal, Provincial and Federal funding initiatives (National Child Benefit, Ontario Works Placement Target Bonus, Provincial Homelessness Initiatives Fund and the Supporting Community Partnerships

Initiative).

The Community Development Investment and Funding (CDIF) Strategy establishes a fair, equitable and transparent process to manage service funding initiatives in the community, and offers a framework and standards to respond to community needs.

In 2004, the Department invited proposals for funding of 2005 projects in a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) process for CDIF and SCPI (Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative). SCPI provides an opportunity for community groups to use federal funding to address issues of homelessness.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

By combining these two processes the Department has eliminated the need for agencies to prepare multiple proposals, and the Departments has optimized the benefits of multiple funding sources.

Additionally, the process allows the department to organize, review, and then strategically commit funds to specific social issues through an organized call for proposals, rather than funding proposals one-off as they are sporadically submitted to the department.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

York Regional Police

Community Resource Centre

What we have done differently:

In the Fall of 2004, York Regional Police opened a Community Resource Centre in the south end of the Region. The Community Resource Centre is where the public may attend to report motor vehicle collisions and/or seek advice on policing-related matters. Additionally, the Centre also offers many of the services that were previously only available from the Information Management Bureau at the Regional Headquarters building in Newmarket such as clearance letters, volunteer screenings and accident reports.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The collision reporting function of the Centre reduces the need for an officer to attend to the scene of a minor accident and hence is a more efficient use of resources. During the last three months of 2004, over two thousand motor vehicle collisions were reported at the Community Resource Centre.

The Community Resource Centre enhances the access of citizens to this service due to its location, extended hours of service, ample parking and proximity to public transportation. The facility also provides a positive presence for Polices Services in the community.

Barriers to further improvements:

The cost benefit ratio may not be such to permit a similar facility to be located in every municipality.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Traffic Safety Committees

What we have done differently:

Traffic Safety Committees have been established in Markham, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury. The committees are held periodically throughout the year and are attended by elected officials, community partners and the District Community Oriented Response Unit. The goal of the committee is to vet community traffic issues and complaints and establish a database of traffic concerns.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

Rather than an officer in a district headquarters receiving traffic related complaints from the public, the Committee allows for complaints to be heard and discussed through a more formal avenue. The process associated with the Committee is more focused and efficient.

The use of Traffic Safety Committees allows local communities to be more involved in traffic issues and possible solutions.

Barriers to further improvements:

The cost benefit ratio may not be such that districts with low population densities would be able to support a similar committee. In addition, there needs to be the individual willingness of communities to participate.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Recruitment

What we have done differently:

York Regional Police have recruited personnel to better represent the diverse communities they serve.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

To improve relationships, engage citizens and ensure sensitivity to all the various cultures within York Region, there has been a concerted effort to recruit and retain staff representative of these diverse backgrounds. Visible minority officers have increased from 10.5% to 12.4% during 2004. This reduces linguistic and cultural barriers and assists in investigations.

Barriers to further improvements:

It is important to pursue strategies that enhance the image and value of choosing policing as a career to overcome any cultural views in this regard.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Corporate Services – Property Services

Energy and Environmental Management System (EEMS)

What we have done differently:

Property services developed an in-house, web-based, real time software system to monitor and track electricity & natural gas consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

This EEMS enables the Region to verify and track energy savings, monitor our Kyoto targets and provide instantaneous reports on energy consumption. It also provides the database for Region's Energy Management Program.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Corporate Services – Human Resources

Long Term Care - Self Insurance

What we have done differently:

A feasibility study determined it would be cost effective to transfer Long Term Care (LTC) WSIB claims from WSIB's Schedule 1 to Schedule 2, effectively moving this group to a model of self- insurance. The transfer was requested from WSIB and York Region paid the special assessment required by WSIB for the transfer ($376,124). Effective July 15, 2004 the LTC Schedule 1 WSIB account was transferred into Schedule 2 with all claims from then on being in Schedule 2.

The Region's fund for the LTC Schedule 2 claim costs are funded at the same rate of payroll that would be been paid to WSIB until the WSIB special assessment for transferring is paid to ensure full funding for the LTC claim costs.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

By transferring the LTC claims into Schedule 2 all claims are in one system with WSIB.

Previously, when LTC was in Schedule 1, the Region paid premium rates that WSIB sets each year based upon the claims experience of our industry rating group. The premium is the amount necessary to pay the estimated cost of claims in the calendar year, plus WSIB overhead costs, plus a component to amortize the WSIB's unfunded liability. Now as a Schedule 2 employer the Region is individually liable for paying the cost of our LTC workers' claims incurring the cost of the WSIB benefits paid during the year for their current and past injuries, plus associated WSIB administrative charges and physician fees. The Region no longer pays WSIB premiums and thus is no longer charged an amount for the WSIB's schedule 1 unfunded liability.

If LTC had remained in Schedule 1 in 2004, the projected WSIB costs for 2004 were $267,316. In 2005 it is safe to say that we would have paid at least this amount, if not more due to the increase in salaries and the WSIB premium rate. The WSIB costs for LTC claims since transferring into Schedule 2 thus far have been approximately $66,000 - a significant financial savings.

Barriers to further improvements:

Now that LTC is in Schedule 2 it is prudent that an effective disability management program continues to be maintained to reduce the impact of workplace injuries and WSIB claim costs so the cost benefits in Schedule 2 self insurance scheme can continue to be achieved.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Finance – Supplies & Services

Purchasing By-law

What we have done differently:

The purchasing by-law sets out the procedures and expenditure limits for purchasing goods and services and awarding contracts, including construction contracts. The new by-law increased the delegated authority given to staff and significantly increased expenditure limits. This by-law was developed through initial consultation with the York Public Buyers Co-op to design a template for use by all public agencies. An internal staff committee was then formed to address issues specific to each department.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The development of a template introduced consistency for vendors and contractors in dealing with public agencies in York Region.

The enhanced expenditure limits enable staff to respond more quickly to suppliers. This is further enhanced by enabling individual departments to authorize purchases up to $50,000.

The challenges to development of further efficiencies are:

1. The need to ensure competitiveness through the tendering process and not permit extensive sole-sourcing.
2. The need for accountability and transparency.

These challenges can be addressed by developing procedures that ensure procedural fairness and accountability while expanding levels of delegation.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Information Technology

York Region Information Technology Strategy (YRITS)

What we have done differently:

The Regional Municipality of York completed the York Region Information Technology Strategy (YRITS) which is designed to prioritize among the competing requests for projects to access information technology infrastructure and resources.

The IT Strategy and 5-Year Plan document represents a synthesis of cross-departmental input guided by the goals and values of Vision 2026 and the Customer Service Strategy. The IT Strategy advocates decisions on investments in information technology projects be based on sound business cases that identify costs and benefits associated with these projects as well as alignment with the services delivered by the business units of the Region.

This achievement was conducted in-house without the use of external consultants in less than 6 months. The innovative process was designed by IT staff and can be repeated on an annual basis to continually update and improve the strategy.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

1. YRITS established a methodology for prioritizing technology projects:

At the start of the IT Strategy work in the fall of 2004, the Information Technology Services Branch had catalogued a waiting list of over 200 IT project requests from departments, in addition to the many maintenance and growth projects needed to sustain the existing information technology infrastructure. These projects were relatively unstructured, and difficult to assess in terms of priority. These projects were grouped into 32 programs based on common project characteristics and were assessed a relative priority based on a series of evaluations. The programs were also assessed based on their impact on the Regional budget, assigned a 5 year implementation schedule, as well responsibility for program delivery between ITS branch and the various departments.

2. YRITS established a clear roles and responsibilities for managing technology projects:

This assessment was needed to ensure proper distribution of roles and responsibilities in accordance with available resources.

3. YRITS formalized a governance structure for managing technology projects:

The key to aligning IT with departmental and corporate goals is to include IT in the business planning process early and at the highest levels and to encourage joint IT – business governance to measure trade offs, to spot redundancies, to identify opportunities and to set priorities using an IT and business capabilities road map. The IT Strategy provides such a road map.

Barriers to further improvements:

There are no barriers to further improvement.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Disaster Recovery Planning in the Regional Municipality of York (DRP)

What we have done differently:

The Region's IT Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) is designed to provide immediate response and subsequent recovery from any unplanned computing services interruption, such as loss of utility services, building evacuation, or catastrophic event such as a major fire. York Region has implemented the first DRP of its kind in a municipality in Canada spending over $1 Million to protect services to York Region citizens, business, and the community.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

In June 2004, the Region tested the DRP plan using staff from all areas of the corporation to test their applications and it was a resounding success. The test was audited by Audit Service Branch who reported the results of the test to the Region's Audit Committee and Council.

In essence, in case of a major disaster, the Region would be able to activate and use mission critical applications within 48 hours. The Region is working diligently to bring it down to a few hours and will also proactively use this DRP plan in preparedness for such things as pandemic flu.

This initiative is not to protect delivery of IT services, it is for the delivery of regional services that are highly depended on technology and IT on a 7/24 basis. Examples of these are:

- Transview to serve transportation services for people with physical disabilities
- SCADA for delivering of our water and wastewater distribution
- Yardi for social housing services
- SDMT for social services
- CCMS for child care services
- Peoplesoft for our financial and human services
- QRS and Schedulesoft for managing EMS Operations and ISCIS
- iPHIS and Point Click Care for Health Services

Barriers to further improvements:

The only barrier is financial (budget). Funds are included annually to support the testing of the Disaster Recovery environment.

Municipal Act – Section 300

Electronic document management system (eDOCS)

What we have done differently:

eDOCS is the corporate system that manages lifecycles of Regional information – from its creation to its destruction. With the proliferation of electronic information and the requirements of legislative compliance such a system is essential for the Regional Municipality of York.

This system provides the following innovations:

1. The combination of document management and records management in one software suite has proved invaluable in the current environment of managing corporate assets and liabilities.
2. The use of web technology has made access to Regional information at 24x7 by eDOCS users across Internet.
3. eDOCS has enhanced made collaboration on projects across workgroups or business units. eDOCS has the potential to automate document centric business processes.
4. eDOCS is an innovative tool for both the Regional employees to manage and control their information by ways of security management and the Regional government to control and manage Regional intellectual assets.

Improvement in efficiency and/or effectiveness:

The following improvements have been identified:

1. Improved customer service by providing immediate response to client inquiries while servicing the clients. The public, Members of Council and

Regional staff will be able to access required documents quickly and efficiently.

2. Reduction of the Region's reliance on paper records through document imaging and sharing electronically.
3. Improved access to information by the public, Councilors and staff members through web based sharing and easy retrieval.
4. Improved ability to recover from a disaster by ensuring electronic off-site storage of Regional documents so that the Region can resume its business very quickly in case of a disaster.
5. Efficient records management and disposition of records. With an EDMS, records management and retention schedules can be tightly integrated with the EDMS and made more user friendly to staff.
6. Enhanced collaboration among staff members. An EDMS provides a central document repository, version control mechanism and web-enabled capability that allow Regional staff to collaborate on projects in an efficient and effective manner.
7. Significant cost avoidance and increased Regional service capacity.

eDOCS users reported productivity improvements and time savings. The time savings estimated by survey respondents appear to be low—on average, 50 minutes a week.

Barriers to further improvements:

The only barrier is financial (budget). Funds are included annually to support the rollout of eDocs to all Regional departments.

Municipal Act – Section 300