

5

PROVINCIAL PAPER - PLANNING FOR EMPLOYMENT

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the following:

- 1. The presentation by Paul Bottomley, Manager, Growth Management Economy and Information Research, Long Range and Strategic Planning, be received; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report dated May 22, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services, be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be forwarded to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal as the Region's comments on the Provincial Discussion Paper, *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: May 2008 Background Paper*.
2. This report be circulated to local municipalities.
3. Regional Council endorse the Employment Policy Directions as a basis for public consultation and policy foundation.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of, and comments on, the *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper* that was released by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal (MPIR) on May 14, 2008. This report also summarises York Region's planning principles for employment.

3. BACKGROUND

Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal has released Planning for Employment Discussion Paper

On January 16, 2006, MPIR released the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006*. The Growth Plan provides a framework for implementing the Province's vision for building strong, prosperous communities. The Growth Plan provides guidance on a wide

range of issues, including: transportation, infrastructure, planning, land-use planning, urban form, housing, natural heritage and resource protection.

As referred to in Policy 5.3.4 of the Growth Plan, MPIR is moving forward with an assessment of employment areas within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper (Attachment 1)* is the first step of this assessment, and intended to be a starting point for dialogue on planning for employment. PIR has asked that feedback on the document be submitted by July 18, 2008.

York Region has completed a considerable amount of work on its employment areas

The Region has completed a considerable amount of research and analysis on the Region's economy and employment. This work includes the:

- Vacant Employment Land Inventory
- Region-Wide Business and Employment Survey
- Annual Employment and Industry Report
- 2031 Employment Forecast (800,000 jobs – an increase of 345,000 jobs)
- Employment Land Area Analysis

These reports provide a good understanding of employment trends in York Region, as well as emerging policy directions.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Province's Employment Paper is progressive and forward looking

The Province's *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper* contains a number of key proposed strategies:

- Proactive planning for employment
- Better information on employment trends and land supply
- Improved design and efficient use of employment areas
- Directing major institutional uses and major office to Regional Centres
- Better planning for major retail uses and industrial activities, warehousing and logistics
- Priority to transit investments in Regional Centres and highways for goods movement
- Identify existing and emerging Strategic Employment Areas
- Consider planning beyond the maximum twenty-year planning horizon

Staff agree with Discussion Paper with a few key suggestions

York Region staff agree in principle with the proposed strategic directions identified in the Provincial Background Paper. The overall approach is progressive, integrated and

comprehensive and addresses a number of issues raised by the Region with the Province. Detailed comments can be found in the evaluation matrix attached as *Attachment 2*.

The following summarises the key comments and suggestions to the Province

Employment Survey	• There is a clear need for better information on employment trends and needs in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. • MPIR has had discussions with Regional staff regarding using the Regional Annual Employment/Business Survey as a model for research in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. • The 2007 York Region Survey is the subject of a separate report to Planning and Economic Development Committee on the June 11, 2008 agenda.
Institutional Uses	• Major institutional uses (hospitals, schools, theatres, social housing) can act as a focus and anchor for Regional Centres.
Major Office	• Similarly, the location of office use in Regional Centres and Corridors or other nodes maximises the use of transit and can improve live/work relationships. • The Province should consider additional fiscal, land use and other tools that would help direct and focus office uses.
Planning for Major Retail	• The Region in previous Council reports has recognized the need to better plan for shopping centres, and large format retail ("big box" retail). • These uses require extensive areas that need to be included in land budget calculation.
Creation of High Quality Jobs	• The creation of high quality jobs in York Region is essential to achieve a better match with our highly skilled labour force. • Investment in research facilities, post-secondary education and a focus on high value added sectors is key.
Infrastructure Planning	• York Region's updated Master Plans for Water, Wastewater and Transportation will be 40-50 year plans for the ultimate urban form of the Region.
Transportation Networks	• In order to make Regional Centres and Corridors successful, significant Provincial investment in transit is required. Similarly, investment in 400 series highways is required, including Highway 427, 404 and the Bradford Bypass. • Early identification and protection of routes for Highway 427 and the West GTA Corridor is required.
Need for Strategic Planning	• York Region needs to provide for the creation of 350,000 jobs in keeping with Provincial forecasts. • The Region has three unique large scale employment areas that need to be recognized as strategic in nature. • These three zones are: the office/high tech area of Markham/Richmond Hill, the manufacturing, transportation and logistics powerhouse in Central and West Vaughan, and the emerging employment area in Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and the Keswick area. • Each of these areas are the centre of economic zones in the Region that will provide for better live/work relationships in the various parts of the Region.

	• It should be noted that the Provincial paper only identifies the Highway 404/407 area in the Town of Markham.
Long Range Strategy for Employment Lands	• The Province should allow for some mechanism that permits the identification and protection of employment lands beyond the twenty-year maximum planning horizon in the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement. • This could take the form of a “Future Employment” designation, perhaps containing careful phasing and sequencing policies. • The Region considers the three major future employment areas of: Richmond Hill/Markham, Central and West Vaughan and East Gwillimbury as essential strategic areas.
Future Employment Lands Adjacent to 404	• It is Regional Council’s view that lands adjacent to Highway 404 in the Greenbelt may have to be considered for employment uses at the ten-year review of the Greenbelt Plan.

YORK REGION EMERGING EMPLOYMENT POLICY DIRECTIONS

A number of Council Reports on employment over the last year have helped to focus the emerging policy for employment in York Region. The forecast for employment in the Region in 2031 is for 800,000 jobs, an increase of 350,000 jobs between 2006 and 2031. The Region currently has approximately 485,000 jobs.

Extensive public input in 2006 and again in 2007 through the *Planning for Tomorrow* program emphasized the importance of the Region’s economy and the need for the creation of quality jobs and improved live/work relationships.

A number of key principles for employment planning are emerging. The following sections discuss these key principles. These principles are the key to creating effective, visionary employment policies for York Region. The principles will be presented and discussed as part of the Region’s extensive public engagement program, *Planning for Tomorrow*, in the Fall of this year.

Plan for the Long Term

The Province’s Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine plans cover 69% of the Region. These plans clearly outline the green/countryside component of York Region and thereby define the Region’s urban structure. A total of 25% of the Region is in the urban envelope, leaving 6% of the Region for future development in the Whitebelt.

The majority of the whitebelt lands will be required by 2031 to accommodate the Province’s forecasted population and employment growth. The whitebelt lands should not be planned in a piecemeal fashion. It is prudent and logical to plan for the ultimate

urban form of York Region. This approach also allows for more comprehensive infrastructure planning.

With respect to employment lands, this approach means that strategically located future employment lands should be identified and protected. This allows the Region to plan for and monitor an appropriate balance between population and employment growth over the long term, which needs to exceed twenty years.

Strategically located future employment lands were identified and a report to Council on April 9 and again on April 30. A map of these lands is included as *Attachment 3*.

Role of different Economic Areas

York Region is a large diverse area with a variety of economic characteristics. Each local municipality plays an important and distinct role in providing employment.

York Region needs to provide for the creation of 350,000 jobs in keeping with Provincial forecasts. The Region has three unique large scale employment areas that need to be recognized as strategic in nature. These three areas are: the office/high tech area of Markham/Richmond Hill; the manufacturing, transportation and logistics area in Central and West Vaughan; and the emerging employment area in Newmarket, East Gwillimbury and the Keswick area.

Each of these three broad economic areas has a different employment sector emphasis, different densities, different built form and different markets. Each is essential to York Region.

Adequate Vacant Land Supply

The Region currently has approximately twelve-years of available vacant employment land. Another five to six years supply is awaiting the extension of Highway 427 and 404 or is Industry on Private Services. A diverse, adequate supply of vacant employment land is essential. Further, an adequate supply in each of the broad economic zones identified above is key.

Early Planning and Construction of 400 Series Highways

In some parts of the Region, effective long term planning for land use and infrastructure is being hindered by uncertainty surrounding the routing of Provincial highways, including the Highway 427 extension and the location of the West GTA Economic Corridor. The timing of construction of these highways, as well as the Highway 404 extension and the Bradford Bypass, create further uncertainty.

These highways provide for effective goods movement which is the lifeblood of future employment areas. Specific identification and protection of these corridors, as well as clarity around the timing of construction is essential.

Plan for Major Retail

Shopping centres and large format retail (“big box” retail) need to be carefully located and planned for. These uses require extensive areas of land and need to be included in land budget calculations.

Major Office Uses should be located in Regional Centres

Major office uses (>100,000 sqFt) should be located in Regional Centres where higher order transit is available. These uses are anchors for Regional Centres and create the opportunity for better live/work relationships.

Similarly, major institutional uses (hospitals, schools, social housing and long term care facilities) should also be located in Centres or Corridors. The Province should re-evaluate its funding formulas to ensure the short term additional costs of locating in these areas is addressed.

High Quality Design

Employment areas should be compact, well designed, and transit accessible with appropriate supportive uses. Building efficient, attractive employment areas is essential.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The objectives of the *Planning for Employment in the Greater Golden Horseshoe* background report are in line with those of Vision 2026. Many of the proposed strategies contained within the background paper focus on gaining a better understanding of employment trends and land supply, creating strategic plans for the location and better design of various employment areas, and ensuring adequate servicing exists. These strategies work to create *A Vibrant Economy* and ensure that *Managed and Balanced Growth* occurs within the Region.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A vibrant economy is essential to a prosperous York Region. A balance of employment and population growth creates more viable communities, reduces long distance commuting and can help minimise environmental degradation.

The analysis in this report is part of the *Planning for Tomorrow* growth management program in York Region and is provided for in the 2007 Council approved budget with existing staff complement.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Forward looking employment policies are essential to each local municipality in York Region. This report will be circulated to local municipalities for comment. Regional staff will continue to work closely with local municipalities on employment policies and growth management issues.

7. CONCLUSION

The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal released *Planning for Employment in The Greater Golden Horseshoe: Background Paper* on May 14, 2008. The paper takes a progressive, long term view of employment. A number of broad strategies in the report address: employment trends, better information, priority investments in transit and highways, identifying strategic employment areas, and planning beyond a twenty-year horizon.

Staff agree with the Provincial report in principle. There is a need for the Province to invest in supportive infrastructure, allow planning for strategic employment areas beyond twenty years supply and look at fiscal tools to encourage the location of major offices and institutional uses in Centres and Corridors.

A number of key principles for employment planning York Region are becoming apparent. These include the need for a long term plan for employment areas beyond 2031 and the need to plan for efficient, well designed, transit supportive employment areas. The employment planning principles in this report will be used as a basis for policy formulation and public consultation.

For more information on this report, please contact John Waller, Director Long Range and Strategic Planning at 905 830-4444 Ext.1525

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The three attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)